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WORLD FIRST REVIEW!

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND



LucasArts' classic pirate adventure is back!
Play the demo and read our full review inside

DEFINITIVE REVIEW!

HALF-LIFE COUNTERSTRIKE

Find out why this is the most popular
online game of all time



HEAVY METAL!

MECHWARRIOR 4 MECHCOMMANDER 2

We visit Microsoft's games mecha



THE TECH TEST!

MONITOR ROUNDUP



Is bigger better?
Find out the best
for gaming on p110

BEHIND THE SCENES!

RETURN TO CASTLE WOLFENSTEIN

Discover id's plan to
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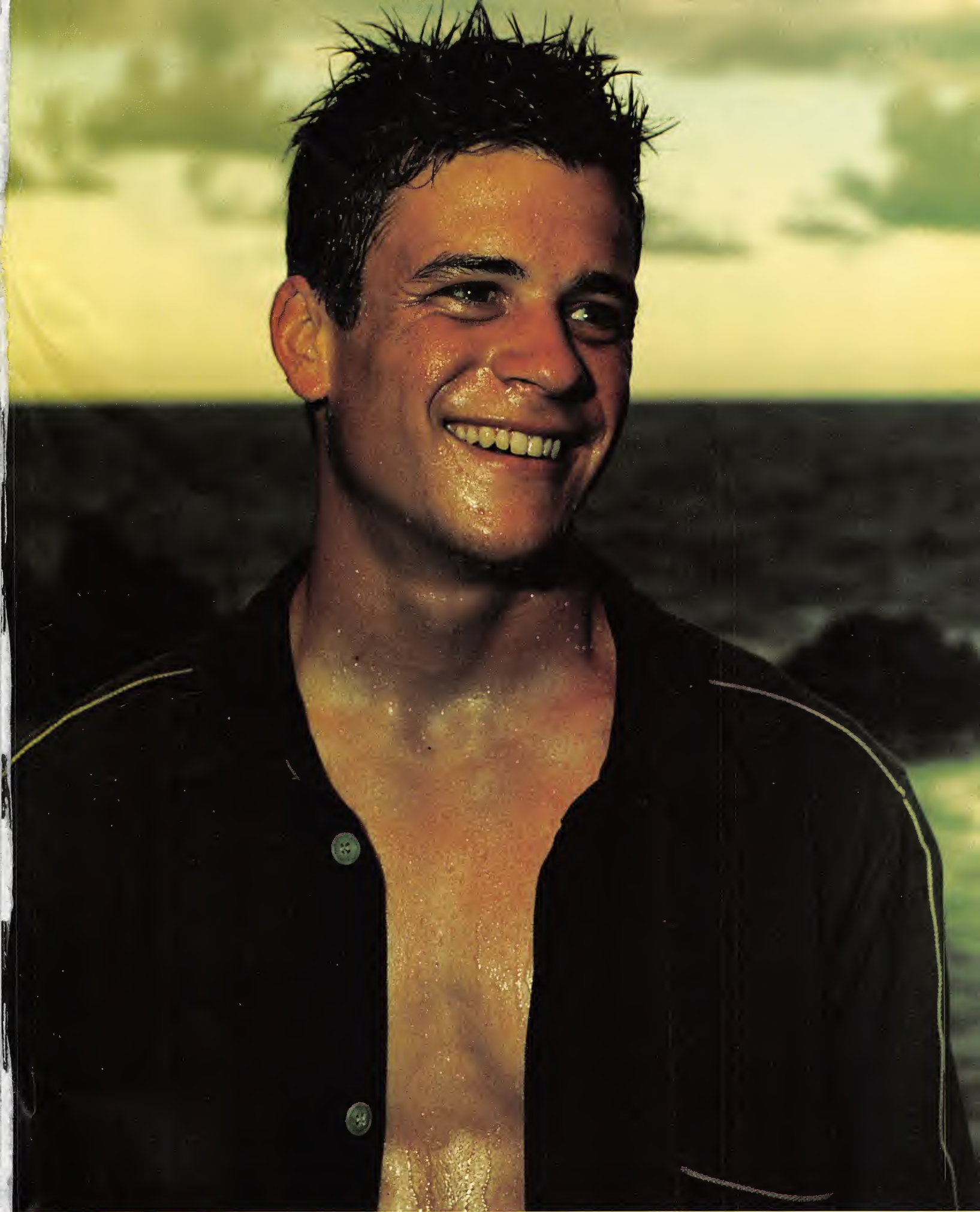
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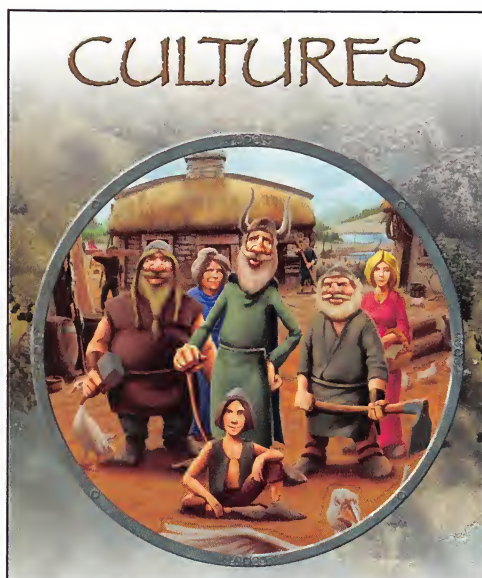
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A Graphical Feast

Cultures offers engrossing graphics and animations. The environment is lush and warm with a diversity of landscapes and tribes from Indians to Mayas. The character animations are captivating and humorous.

Great attention to detail and highly effective AI

Each character is an individual both physically, defined with different clothes, hair and other physical attributes, and in terms of their personality. Characters need to eat and sleep, marry, have children and progress through different jobs. This adds to the dynamics of the game play and the attachment the player acquires for his tribesmen.

Intuitive Control System

The control system is designed to ensure immediate accessibility to all levels of experience. The interface enables easy access to all Vikings, clicking on the home allows the player to instantly locate them regardless of where they are on your map. In battle a bar above their head indicates the state of health during combat, essential in a good real-time strategy game.

Instantly gratifying with rewarding long-term gameplay

The player must undertake complex missions with multiple mission objectives. Each mission is placed on a huge map, which has to be discovered by the player; who will encounter numerous physically varied locations and enemy tribes.



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BE THE FIRST TO DISCOVER...



CULTURES

THE DISCOVERY OF VINLAND

CONTENTS

72 Escape From Monkey Island

Over ten years ago, LucasArts breathed new life into the adventure game with the seminal Secret of Monkey Island. The series' fourth episode shows that silly humour doesn't age



118



CD PowerPlay #55

All of this month's Gaming Goodness in one handy jewel case!

42 My First PC

Tips for buying a PC this Christmas



52 Return to Castle Wolfenstein

The most eagerly awaited game of next year



66 Counter-Strike

All you need to know about the internet's favourite game



SPOTLIGHT

12

Gaming news from all quarters of the globe

12 Gunman Chronicles

Mix dinosaurs, aliens, the wild west and the Half-Life engine - and stir

14 Pro Rally 2001

This visually stunning rally sim could be on track for a race record

16 Spotlight News

Full report from ECTS, plus a veritable smorgasbord of new games

22 Charts

Featuring the mag's most popular section, Australia's Most Wanted

SERVER

31

Your connection to the internet

31 Server News

What's the latest on digital music?

34 Tweak Your Modem

Maximise your modem's power

36 Online RPGs

Where now for virtual worlds?

38 Mod Life

A new column all about mods

IN PREVIEW

52

The shape of games to come

52 Return to Castle Wolfenstein

And not a blue corridor in sight!

56 MechWarrior

MechCommander 2

Two games for the one preview

60 ST: Bridge Commander

One of the few certainties in life

63 State of Play

Do you think if we wrote this here that anyone would notice?

IN REVIEW

71

The most authoritative reviews around

72 Escape From Monkey Island

But why would you want to escape? Monkeys are great! They're so cheeky and funny and silly and they make amusing noises. We all want to live on a Monkey Island



76 Sacrifice

80 Crimson Skies

84 Dirt Track Racing Australia

82 ST Voyager: Elite Force

88 Half-Life: Counter-strike

90 Homeworld: Cataclysm

92 MTV Skateboarding

93 V-Rally 2

94 Rugby 2001

TECH

104

The silicon state of the art

104 Tech News

Hardware happenings are here

106 Hotware

Latest hardware & peripherals reviewed

110 Round-up

We put the best monitors to the test

112 The Beast

All the components you need to assemble a supercomputer

114 Setup

If your PC is ailing, Dr Dan will put it right for you

REGULARS

24

24 Inbox

96 Score List

98 Retroversion: Diablo II

118 CD PowerPlay

124 Action Replay

127 Flashback

128 Competition

129 Diversions

130 Next Month

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100

100 Subscribe and win!

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A TRUE CLASSIC



DAVID WILDGOOSE
Nietzsche. For being a mad, mad, wild-eyed genius.

WHAT I'M PLAYING
Planescape: Torment

Game journalism is full of hyperbole. Few good games get released these days without being hailed as "revolutionary", "mould-breaking" or just plain "classic". Read any amateur (or professional, for that matter) website for proof. Or, on second thoughts, don't. Though it shames me to admit, we're all guilty - to varying degrees - of doing it. Perhaps it is understandable however, given that the industry is still in an infancy where each small development in gameplay or technology appears as a bold and exciting glimpse of the future.

Yet the end result of such hyper-hyperbole - if you will - is that the genuine classics become more difficult to discern. In an industry where exaggeration is everything, the real revolutions are often understated.

It's easy to forget the importance of Wolfenstein 3D and the crucial role it played in the development of PC gaming. With its release, id Software's remarkable achievement was to irreversibly alter an entire industry. It was the original firstperson shooter - the game genre

that has since become synonymous with the PC. It proved that a 3D world was a feasible environment for a realtime action game. And, of course, it demonstrated the coding genius of John Carmack. Indeed, so great is Wolfenstein 3D's legacy, can you imagine another title that could generate as much fevered anticipation at the announcement of its sequel some *ten* years later? I certainly don't envy the task id and Gray Matter have set themselves with Return to Castle Wolfenstein.

The original Secret of Monkey Island is another game that would mount a strong claim to classic status. Regarded by many as the definitive adventure game, it stands alongside Day of the Tentacle as an emblem of LucasArts in its heyday. Now in its fourth chapter, Escape From Monkey Island is a worthy addition to the series, as you'll discover in our review on p72.

And, finally, to Counter-Strike. How will it be remembered? If PC PowerPlay has anything to do with writing the history, it may well rank right up there with Wolfenstein.

david@next.com.au

THE PC POWERPLAY CREW

Gripped by Wolfenstein fever, we wondered who are our favourite Germans?



BRETT ROBINSON
Oliver Bierhoff. He carried them through the 1998 World Cup.
WHAT I'M PLAYING
Counter-Strike



HUGH NORTON-SMITH
Dr Josef Mengler. A medical pioneer.
WHAT I'M PLAYING
Elite Force



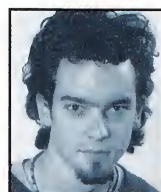
MARCH STEPNIK
Heike, the maiden who serves beer at my local. For the obvious reasons.
WHAT I'M PLAYING
Sacrifice



HARRY MARAGOS
The bartender during Oktoberfest.
WHAT I'M PLAYING
Unreal Tournament



CHANTAL BAIRLE
Blixa Bargeld for his bangin' shopping trolley antics.
WHAT I'M PLAYING
Hookie on the beach



ASHLEY MILLOTT
Kreator; German death metal band.
WHAT I'M PLAYING
Reckless Drivin'



MIKE WILCOX
Beethoven. Even back then, musos always got the chicks.
WHAT I'M PLAYING
Metal Gear Solid



MJ DES MCNICHOLAS
I mentioned the war once, but I think I got away with it.
WHAT I'M PLAYING
Combat Flight Sim 2



CHRISTIAN READ
Schwanger. No reason, just because.
WHAT I'M PLAYING
In Cold Blood



EDWARD FOX
Schumacher. The most talented driver since Ayrton Senna.
WHAT I'M PLAYING
Superbikes 2001



RYAN HOVINGH
Steffi Graf. For her legs rather than her nose, of course.
WHAT I'M PLAYING
Wolfenstein 3D!



JOHN DEWHURST
Bach, Beethoven, Brahms, Alec Empire. So much fine music, who can decide?
WHAT I'M PLAYING
Monkey Island

PC PowerPlay

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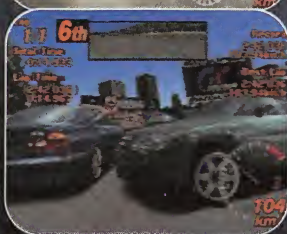
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FIRST LOOK!

GUNMAN CHRONICLES

A FUTURISTIC GAME CAPTURING THE ESSENCE OF THE WILD WEST, WITHOUT WILL SMITH



DETAILS

GENRE

Firstperson Law Enforcement

MULTIPLAYER

Yes

DEVELOPER

Rewolf Software

PUBLISHER

Sierra Studios

DUE

4th Qtr 2000

URL

www.rewolfsoftware.com/gunman

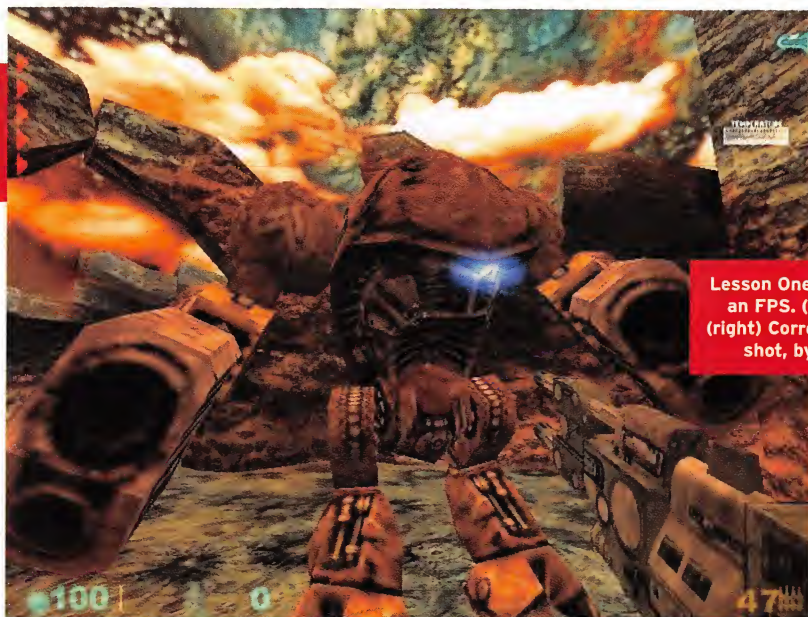
➔ **The origin of Gunman Chronicles** is interesting to say the least. What started out as a Quake mod being created by an inexperienced team of gaming enthusiasts has metamorphosed into a stand-alone retail release built using the Half-Life engine and partially funded by Valve Software.

With four distinct worlds and more than seventy different levels to explore, diversity is one thing Gunman Chronicles will not lack. Rewolf aims to provide an entirely new singleplayer experience, one that will be achieved by combining original weapons and audio effects with completely new enemies and artwork. The game's enormous

texture palette is especially indicative of the phenomenal effort that has been expended in fleshing out Gunman's intricate levels.

Following in the footsteps of Half-Life's creator, Rewolf hopes to immerse the player in the game's constantly evolving storyline. In a futuristic world reminiscent of America's Wild West, the player will adopt the role of a Gunman:





Lesson One: how to play an FPS. (left) Wrong (right) Correct - and nice shot, by the way



The seriously disturbed scenery is a far cry from Half-Life's Black Mesa compound



a law enforcement officer charged with keeping the peace in a frontier land where vigilante justice often prevails and organised revolts are commonplace. When an alien race invades five years after dispatching a probe team to the area, it will be up to the player to thwart the imminent takeover of the world and its surrounding planets. Somewhat clichéd, but exciting nonetheless.

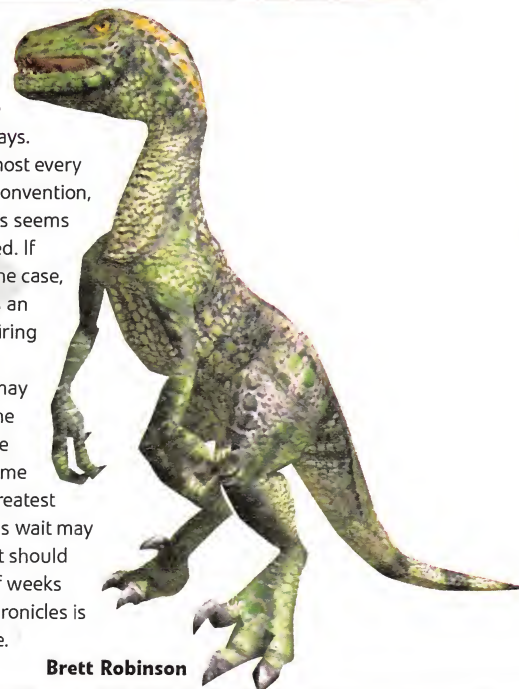
A big arsenal

One of Gunman Chronicles' most compelling features is the customisable nature of its weapons. Offering more than just a secondary or even tertiary fire option, each of the game's eight weapons will have several adjustable variables that will influence the weapon's performance. For example, the chemical

gun's variables are Acid, Neutral, Base and Pressure. These can be increased or decreased to a virtually infinite degree, making it possible to fire a thin stream of corrosive acid or gelatinous spheres of equally toxic alkali. However, the player will have to exercise a great deal of caution: these guns aren't like harmless children's chemistry sets. Thus, reckless experimentation could quite easily result in the spontaneous destruction of the gun and its firer. Exhibiting even more potential for mayhem than the chemical gun, the Multiple Unit Launch Engine (MULE) will boast a staggering eleven different firing modes. These will allow the weapon to fulfil a number of roles ranging from guided missile launcher to cluster bomb disperser to proximity mine layer. The weapon's versatility won't end there, though. In the absence of the MULE itself, it will be possible for the player to dismantle the

weapon's ammunition and put it to use in one of four different ways. Having broken almost every existing industry convention, Gunman Chronicles seems destined to succeed. If this proves to be the case, it will also serve as an inspiration for aspiring game developers everywhere, and may one day become the impetus behind the development of some of the industry's greatest games. Though this wait may seem intolerable, it should only be a matter of weeks before Gunman Chronicles is released worldwide.

Brett Robinson



WHY GUNMAN CHRONICLES DEMANDS A SECOND LOOK...

➔ It's funded and endorsed by the creator of Half-Life

➔ Customisable weapons have lots of single and multiplayer potential

➔ It will support deathmatches of up to 32 players

➔ Strong AI will make every battle a challenge

FIRST LOOK!

PRO RALLY 2001

LOOKS LIKE COLIN MCRAE DOESN'T HAVE THE RALLY MARKET CORNERED JUST YET

DETAILS

GENRE

Racing Sim

MULTIPLAYER

Yes

DEVELOPER

Ubisoft

PUBLISHER

Ubisoft

DUE

December 2000

URL

www.ubisoft.com

Ed's race lead was so great he had time to pull up at the side of the road for a leak



➔ Rally titles have had their fair share of market exposure over the last few years, what with superlatives like Rally Masters and Rally Championship following in the wake of the success Colin McRae. The exceptional McRae did for rally sims what Doom did for firstperson action gaming - it was a defining moment. The continual increase of quality witnessed since has been welcome.

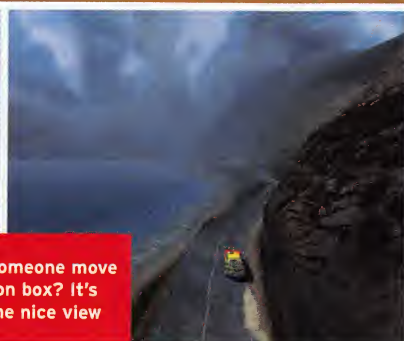
However, as with any established genre, every now and then a change is needed. Whether this comes in the form of a quick thrill title or a melding of genres, it serves the essential need for diversity in an industry which is quite frankly losing some of its "originality" appeal. Enter Pro Rally 2001.



(right) Okay, which smart-arse kidnapped my pit crew?



Hey, could someone move this caption box? It's blocking the nice view



Ups and downs

Pro Rally 2001 is an upcoming release from our good friends at Ubisoft. Though not immediately earth-shattering in design or concept, it is certain to offer what many recent titles have only considered as an afterthought to realism. Fun - and lots of it!

The code at this point is still very primitive, yet in the alpha guise that we managed to get our mitts on, the title really looks to be shaping up nicely. Right off the bat, Pro Rally is set to take the genre honours for prettiness. Put simply, the visuals are gorgeous. Skirting along an English back-road at 150mph to a night time

blitz thorough mud and dirt in torrential rain, it's always a no-holds barred situation when it comes to the graphics. Prepare to be seriously impressed.

In a throwback to previous titles, Pro Rally 2001 has gone back to the use of fictitious venues at which to race. In doing so, it shows that realism can be restricting. It has allowed Ubisoft to come up with some of the most challenging - not to mention treacherous - tracks ever witnessed in any rally title. If you thought the mountains of southern Wales depicted in Rally Championship were something else, wait until you see the awesome climbs and drops Pro Rally 2001

has to offer. In just one of the deadly mountainous stages, the dirt track will climb what must be well over 500 feet of pure cliff-face, with a sickening car-demolishing fall the only prize for coming unstuck!

At this early stage, the only suspect element of Pro Rally 2001 is the meagre physics engine. Granted, the emphasis is definitely on arcade thrills rather than painstaking realism, but there's still considerable room for improvement. There's plenty of time left to do precisely that before the game hits release. Fingers crossed that it happens.

Edward Fox

WHY PRO RALLY 2001 DEMANDS A SECOND LOOK...

→ Tracks are original, challenging, and completely mad!

→ It's mainstream rally racing with an arcade bent

→ Graphics are some of the best ever witnessed from the genre

→ Let's see if the physics engine is improved

FEATURING

16



BATTLEFIELD '42

17



EUROPA

18



GANGSTERS 2

Spotlight

GAMING NEWS FROM ALL QUARTERS OF THE GLOBE

European Computer Trade Show

MIKE WILCOX CHECKS OUT EUROPE'S ANSWER TO E3

It suddenly became quite clear to me, mid-journey on London's Underground, that I was on no ordinary mission. I'd been eavesdropping on two guys who were heading to the same destination, on the same mission. One warned the other, "You gotta be tough! There'll be guys dressed in bright foam suits trying to tackle you to the floor, babes draped in CDs, floppy discs and not much else, and then there's the pressure of trying to get into the all best after-show parties."

The mission that I speak of is attending Europe's premier interactive entertainment expo - ECTS (European Computer Trade Show) which was held from September 3-5 at London Olympia. It was then I wondered if either of the guys on the tube realised the place would actually be full of videogames.

There is no denying ECTS rates a distant cousin, half-removed, to the leviathan that is E3, held in Los Angeles each May. The entire industry acknowledges this, yet it's an important event for those based in the world's largest PAL region. The United States has its trade show, as does Japan, so if anything this event fills in the global gap. Obviously it serves a far greater purpose than that, and the 21,500 strong attendees (up 30% on 1999) from 67 countries were undeniable proof.

After giving the console stand extravaganzas - and associated life size foam



Though still large, ECTS is dwarfed by E3



Now there's a dedicated peripheral we'd like to have in the office



Codemasters' McRae sequel was a show hit



ECTS Top Five

IF THE CONSTANT NUMBER OF THE ONLOOKERS WAS ANYTHING TO GO BY, THESE ARE THE GAMES TO LOOK OUT FOR...

NO GATHERING

Definitely the most disappointing news this month concerns Lionhead's decision to abandon The Gathering, the promised online demo for Black & White. No reason for the move was given, but the continual delays to the full game release might provide some insight. The team has now turned its attention to a 30 minute movie entitled The Making of Black & White - which you will find on our coverdisc in a few issues time.

				
1. Red Faction	2. Fargate	3. Tribes 2	4. Colin McRae Rally 2.0	5. Gunman Chronicles
Volition's upcoming firstperson shooter looks better than at E3, thanks to the introduction of 32-bit colour depth and resolutions beyond 800x600. And of course its main feature, the Geo-Mod engine, the technology that enables complete deformation of your surroundings within each level.	Super X Studios (formerly ThrushWave Technology) has been working on a 3D space RTS that looks set to rival, if not further, the Homeworld series. FarGate looks to be a blend of the Homeworld style with strategy that seems similar (in terms of the building aspect) to Microsoft's Conquest.	The latest developments in Dynamix's promising follow-up title showed improvements in collision detection, plus special effects and environmental details, such as realistic snow and rain effects. See the news story on p18 for a Tribes 2 development update	Sporting a new Ford Focus, this adrenaline-seeking driver's new offering brings all the fun of multiplayer action to rallying in a brand new mode. The damage system has also been redesigned, as has the dynamic weather effects for more realism.	Upcoming FPS which is a stand-alone singleplayer game built upon the Half-Life engine. The title is being developed by Rewolf Software (under the guidance of Valve), a group of game designers from all around the world who've never met each other.



Always a strong drawcard at any games show

mascots - a wide berth, I discovered a number of the hardware manufacturers presented a good place to start inspecting some of the highlights of the show.

The Games!

Nvidia was using Codemasters and one or two other select publishers to showcase what the new GeForce2 Ultra can really do. Colin McRae Rally 2.0 proved that bumping, rolling and sliding has never looked so stylish. While back over at the Codies stand, a pair of overall wearing blondes were challenging onlookers to try the equally pumped multiplayer, 4x4, go anywhere racer Insane, which proved insanelly addictive.

INTEL was showing off their latest chips and bits, running demos of several hot titles, including Sacrifice, Hitman, Project IGI (I'm Going In), I-War 2, Midtown Madness 2, Crimson Skies, and Elite Force. And for those lucky enough to find a spare spot on the floor, Lionhead's Peter

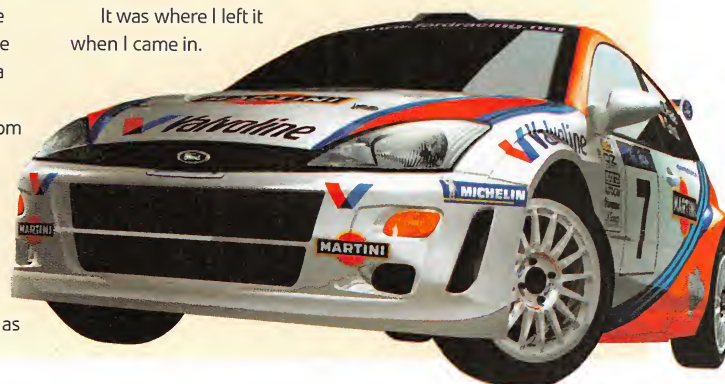
Molyneux appeared briefly at the stand to discuss features of Black & White, including the characters' ability to communicate with Outlook Express and read players' email.

With a quick whip around the top level of both massive halls, the list of noteworthy titles soon grew longer than the cue for VIP tickets to Sony's infamous ECTS party. From an 18-wheeler Mercedes truck sim and expansions for Diablo II and Everquest, to other much-anticipated games like Warcraft III, even a naughty new adult adventure game called Erotica-Island seemed to be getting a lot of the limelight (thanks to a pair of booth babes).

Noticeably missing from the showroom floor this year were three of the big publishers, Electronic Arts, Eidos, and Interplay, with the former two choosing to hold a special press events before the start of the show. However, this didn't prevent Interplay's Sacrifice from taking out the Game of the Show award, as voted by a panel of Euro journo's.

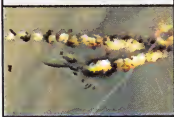
All up, it was a show with not really that much new on display (since E3), other than minor improvements to existing titles all around. So with trade bags stuffed full with press material, a nosebleed from excessively loud techno produced by bad dancing games, and the mandatory quota of free t-shirts, I felt my mission had reached its weary end. And with that, I wandered aimlessly for 20 minutes trying to find the exit...

It was where I left it when I came in.



TYPHOON HITS

DiD isn't dead. The British developer, renowned for its flight sims, was bought by Rage Software earlier this year, but its most popular series will continue. Here are some lovely shots of Typhoon, the follow-up to EF2000 and Total Air War.



Extra!

The Add-on Column



Ground Control has acquired an expansion pack this month. Entitled *Dark Conspiracy*, its narrative follows on from where the original left off, with the Order of the New Dawn the bad guys once more. There will be an as-yet-unspecified number of new singleplayer missions, as well as several new multiplayer modes. While the new terrain sets and extra units sound like Massive is playing it safe, there will also be a third faction entering the war to spice things up.

Black Isle's successful *Icewind Dale* also gets the add-on treatment, with the expansion, *Heart of Winter*, taking the player's party to the town of Lonelywood in the northern region of the *Forgotten Realms*. Features include an 800x600 resolution, a drop-away interface, gem bags and scroll cases (a la *Baldur's Gate II*) to aid inventory management, heaps of new items and spells,

and the obligatory increase in the experience point cap.

Meanwhile, work continues on *Quake III: Team Arena* to balance the four additional teamplay modes, four new weapons, and twelve extra maps.

Though id Software still maintain the usual "when it's done" line, we're assured it will actually be released in either late November or early December. Which year our source was referring to, we can't be sure.



Battlefield 1942

A WHOLE WAR IN JUST ONE YEAR

Yes, we can see it now. The player sits in a cold, muddy trench for, let's say, several weeks, and all the while shrapnel, artillery and the guy with the moustache from the 3rd regiment bombard day and night. Finally, the order comes to go over the top, and you get your head blown off three seconds later. A terrific premise for a game, we think.

But what's this about a tactical firstperson shooter? The ability to fly planes and pilot tanks and submarines? And the potential for up to 64 players to join in the war online? Developer Digital Illusion has clearly put a lot more thought into its forthcoming *Battlefield 1942* than we did.

It's not only a multiplayer game, however. The singleplayer campaign promises to be dynamic and extensive, while the deformable terrain and destructible buildings offer a wealth of gameplay possibilities. How well they will be exploited will be discerned later next year.



Still, it'll be out well before Team Fortress 2



Is it just us or are WWII sims the new hot genre?

Tribes 2 Delayed

FINISHING TOUCHES ARE REQUIRED...

Sierra's ambitious teamplay action game, Tribes 2, has caught the disease of *Team Fortress 2*. Scheduled for an October 2000 release, the title is now not even going to be guaranteed to see the light of day before this year's end. In a statement that further explains this delay, Dynamix's Dave Georgeson, revealed:

"We decided it would be best to extend the beta test and appropriately finesse the game so it meets the highest standards. This means we will be able to ensure the greater compatibility testing and play balancing that a game of this scale requires."



Europa

AH, NANOTECHNOLOGY

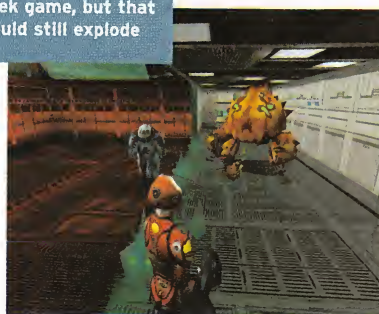
Following in the footsteps of

System Shock 2 comes Europa, a sci-fi action/adventure with recognisable roleplaying elements. Developed in Australia by Evolution Games, it tells a tale of advances in genetic research and nanotechnology, deep space travel, mining operations on the gas giants in our solar system, and the discovery of eerily similar alien organisms on Earth and Europa, one of Jupiter's moons.

Presented with a thirdperson perspective on the action, the player will have the option to choose one of three distinct characters. The developer anticipates the game will need to be played around about three times over - completing it as each of the characters - before the full impact of the story can be experienced. For the multiplayer-inclined, there should also be the capacity to play through cooperatively.

We think it's fair to say that Europa is one game that we are really looking forward to getting our hands on.

Careful, mate, this might not be a Star Trek game, but that console could still explode



CRIMINALS

Below you will see two shots from a game called Crime Cities. We know next to nothing about it, save for the fact that it's like G-Police but in flying cadillacs, and it has a non-linear mission structure. How mysterious...



Win!

ESCAPE THE DAILY GRIND

With there not being quite enough room to squeeze all THQ's copies of MTV Skateboarding on the shelves of gamestores around the country, they decided to send the leftover five boxes to us. Since we already had a copy for review, we didn't exactly know what to do with these extras.

Then a flash of inspiration took hold - we could give them away to you! To win one of five copies of MTV Skateboarding (featuring Andy MacDonald), answer the following question: WHAT IS ANDY MACDONALD'S MOST NOTABLE CLAIM TO FAME?

Put your answer on the back of an envelope and send your entry to:

MTV Skateboarding Comp
PC PowerPlay,
78 Renwick St,
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STAR GATE

Formerly known as The Rift, Thrushware's realtime strategy game set in space has been cheekily renamed FarGate. It's still a gorgeous looking game, though, with considerable similarity to Homeworld. Microïds has been recently announced as publisher, with a release set down for December.

INCOMING!

The sequel to Rage Software's hit action/strategy title, Incoming, is underway now. The design direction of Incoming forces seems set to move closer to the strategy side of things, but the all-new graphics engine will surely show off the battles to full effect.

Gangsters 2

EIDOS GETS HEAVY ON US AGAIN



We've bought pinstripe suits for the occasion



their exploits - and those of your rivals - in the newspaper the next day. Pacno wannabes should apply early next year.

If the notion of a realtime strategy game where your units include card-sharps, hitmen, arsonists and safecrackers doesn't pique your interest, then, well, it looks like we will just have to send the boys around to deal with you. The sequel to the self-proclaimed "Godfather" of gangster sims boasts realtime gameplay where the day/night cycle is crucial to your criminal operations. You can hire specialist thugs to expand your mob rule empire and then read about

Who said adventure gaming was at a dead-end, eh? Geddit?



Road to El Dorado

24 CARAT ADVENTURING

In Cold Blood developer, Revolution Software, and Dreamworks Interactive have teamed up on the development of an interesting new title, The Road to El Dorado, the game will follow the journey of lifelong friends, Miguel and Tulio, as they travel in search of the elusive city of gold. Gameplay details are scarce, but fantastic graphics are Dreamworks' forte, so this is sure to be an attractive adventure game at the very least. And given Revolution's pedigree, it's more than likely to tell a compelling tale as well.



The Moon Project

WHY ISN'T IT CALLED EARTH 2160?

Those lovable Germans at Topware are fiendishly

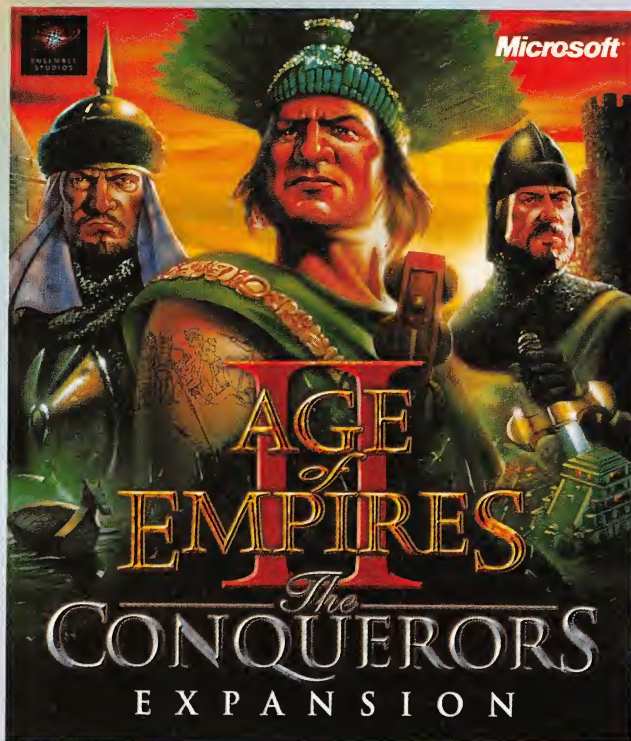
beaver away on the third in the Earth series - that's after Earth 2140 and Earth 2150, chronology fans. The latter was a highly-acclaimed (91%, PCPP#53) take on the trendy 3D realtime strategy groove, so we are rather keen to see how the "triquel" shapes up. As Topware is only going to enhance the game engine rather than developing something completely new, don't expect many surprises here. Nonetheless, avid Earth 2150 players should be in for a real treat with The Moon Project.



A moon setting means enormous savings on texture memory



WAR and PEACE



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Coming soon

OUR GUIDE TO GAMING AHEAD...

NOVEMBER 2000

Alice	Electronic Arts
B-17 2: The Mighty Eighth	Hasbro
Blair Witch Vol.2	Jack of all Games
Delta Force: Land Warrior	Electronic Arts
Hitman	Ozisoft
Insane	Ozisoft
Quake III: Team Arena	Activision
Rune	Jack of all Games
Zeus	Jack of all Games

DECEMBER 2000

Colin McRae Rally 2	Ozisoft
Conquest: Frontier Wars	Microsoft
Giants: Citizen Kabuto	Interplay
Half-Life Counterstrike	Jack of all Games
Jetfighter 4	Jack of all Games
MechWarrior 4	Microsoft
No One Lives Forever	Electronic Arts
Starship Troopers	Hasbro
Stupid Invaders	Ubisoft
Tribes 2	Jack of all Games

JANUARY 2001

Blair Witch Vol.3	Jack of all Games
Loose Cannon	Microsoft
MechCommander 2	Microsoft
Obi-Wan	Electronic Arts
Project IGI	Ozisoft
StarTopia	Ozisoft

FEBRUARY 2001

Anachronox	Ozisoft
Arcanum	Jack of all Games
Black & White	Electronic Arts
I-War 2	Ozisoft
Oni	Jack of all Games
Project Eden	Ozisoft
Return to Castle Wolfenstein	Activision
Throne of Darkness	Jack of all Games



Australia's most wanted

With the exception of Peter Molyneux's ambitious morality experiment, several of last month's most anticipated games have moved down the ranks. Halo and Team Fortress 2 have moved up to second and third positions respectively, and former favourites like Giants and Freelancer have dropped out of the top ten altogether. Taking their place are relative newcomers like Hitman: Codename 47, Tribes 2 and Sacrifice.



Only time will tell if the delayed release of Tribes 2 will see it temporarily vanish from the chart as well. Though of course such events haven't prevented Halo and Team Fortress 2 from maintaining a high place in the chart. This month's winner, Mitchell Cole of WA, will soon be enjoying the view from the cockpit of a Madcat when his copy of Mechwarrior 4 arrives. Send your Top Five Most Wanted Games to PC PowerPlay at: wanted@pcpowerplay.com.au

1	BLACK & WHITE	◀
2	Halo	◀
3	Team Fortress 2	◀
4	Duke Nukem Forever	◀
5	Commandos 2	◀
6	Hitman: Codename 47	◀
7	Sacrifice	◀
8	Warcraft 3	◀
9	Tribes 2	◀
10	Mechwarrior 4	◀

Hall of fame

PCPP'S MOST RECENT GOLD AWARDED GAMES - BUY THEM ALL!

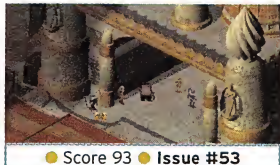


Score 90 Issue #54

Age of Kings: The Conquerors

Microsoft

Ensemble introduces several new races and improves on an already fantastic game with this superlative add-on.



Score 93 Issue #53

Baldur's Gate II

Interplay

Classic roleplaying courtesy of Bioware, Black Isle and the 3rd Edition AD&D rules.



Score 91 Issue #53

Earth 2150

Mattel Interactive

Extensive and exhaustive, this is one of the most accomplished realtime strategy titles in a long time.

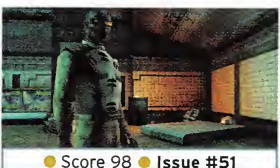


Score 90 Issue #52

Ground Control

Jack of all Games

Swedish developer Massive redefines realtime strategy in Ground Control with intense tactical combat and a glorious 3D engine.



Score 98 Issue #51

Deus Ex

Ozisoft

Is it an RPG? Or is it an FPS? Deus Ex lets you decide how you want to play it. The best game of all time, in our humble opinion.

Our most wanted



Alice

David: It appeals to my black sense of humour



Freelancer

March: Han Solo-style pimpin' Privateer style



Duke Nukem Forever

Brett: Let the wait begin



Return to Castle Wolfenstein

Hugh: Sieg Heil!

Games Charts

THIS MONTHS BEST SELLERS...

The Official Australian PC Games Chart

Compiled by Inform in association with AVSDA

August 2000

Top 20 Best Selling Full Price PC Games

(>\$29.95 inc. GST)

Position	Game Title	Game Type
1	↔ Diablo 2	RPG
2	↑ Grand Prix 3	Racing
3	↑ Sim Mania Pack	Bundle
4	↓ The Sims	Strategy
5	↔ Cmmnd. & Cnqr. Tiberian Sun	Strategy
6	↔ Age of Empires 2	Strategy
7	↑ Deus Ex	RPG
8	★ Master Of Dimensions	Action
9	★ Sim Mania For Kids	Strategy
10	↓ Shogun: Total War	Strategy
11	★ Croc	Platform
12	↓ Icewind Dale	RPG
13	↓ Dark Reign 2	Strategy
14	↑ Croc 2: Legend of The Gobbos	Platform
15	↓ Motocross Madness	Racing
16	↓ Cmmnd. & Cnqr. World Warfare	Strategy
17	↓ Vampire: The Masquerade	Adventure
18	★ Lego Racers	Racing
19	★ Flight Sim 2000 Std	Simulator
20	★ Quake 3 Arena	Action

Inform

↔ New entry
↑ Up from last month
↓ Down from last month

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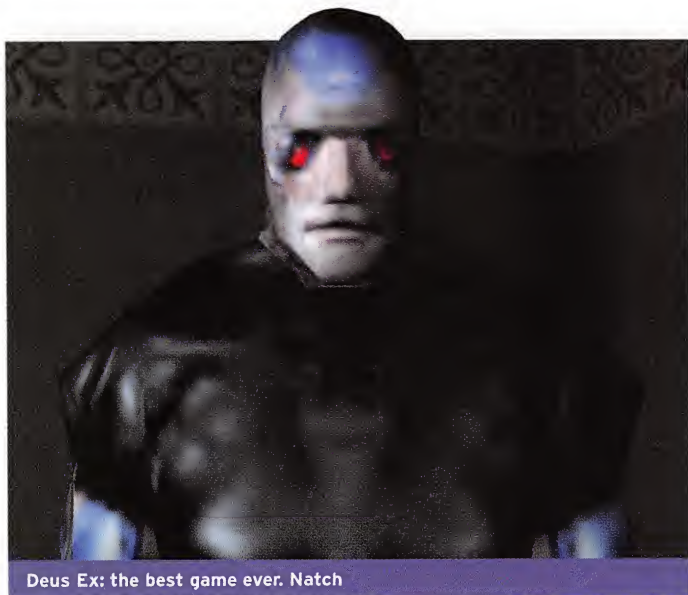
HP2



INBOX

Letters Tip: Don't tell us PCPP is a great mag. We already know...

Write to: PC PowerPlay Letters, 78 Renwick St, Redfern 2016. Email: letters@pcpowerplay.com.au



Deus Ex: the best game ever. Natch

The instant enjoyment

It has come to my attention that the latest games that are okay instantly become classics and the greatest games to you. Prime examples being Deus Ex (No.1 game already), Age Of Empires 2 (No.2 in the Top 50 after being reviewed two issues earlier), and Sydney 2000 (No.51 and reviewed in the same issue).

Now I am not saying these games aren't good, but I feel that for a game to be best ever it needs to be popular over a period of time, constantly played over time and, for me anyway, give life to the genre it came from again. Half-Life, in particular, came at a time where I was losing interest in the FPS genre. I played a demo of this game and thought it was okay. I played the full game at a friend's

BYTE SIZE

Question: What is that suited guy in Half-Life actually do? Is he important?
Colonel Klink

house, and that's when I really thought, "Hey, this is really a great game". Over a year later, I have bought it and Opposing Force and I still constantly play it.

So I feel that games need time in the community to become real greats, and not just the instant enjoyment from the first time playing it. I feel that's where your Top 100 is hard to accept, that brand new games are making their way in when there's a chance they won't be played in a month or so.

Andrew Keunen

BYTE SIZE

Can you guys explain why Optus can provide cable at 1.5mbps and Telstra cap its service to 256/512k? Is the uptake of Telstra cable greater than Optus by a factor of 6, or are customers just getting screwed?

Kamil Aghtan

Do we arbitrarily choose a cut-off date so that, for example, no game released in the last twelve months is eligible for the Top 100? That's just plain silly.



LETTER OF THE MONTH

Spending all night

Why do we as Australians have to wait months for a game to get released that has already been released around the world? You can sit back and wait for a game to get released, read reviews praising it (in foreign mags), but the release date for Australian users is many months after. Of course the guy next door who has a large internet account and doesn't mind spending all night with getright downloading rar files can have the game downloaded, played and completed before the shops have it.

Now in all seriousness I am not a download and play person, and I do buy and play games, but I am not

impressed with having to wait. The same can go with movies. A guy next door can have a VCD of the latest movie before we even get it in the cinema.

We live in a world where information can be transferred from one side of the planet to another, yet some idiot marketing guru still makes the customers wait for months. If you ask me, he is helping piracy to flourish.

Ivan Wheelwright

Publishers are increasingly adopting a simultaneous worldwide release strategy to combat piracy. Let's all hope that it succeeds.

Purchase a secondhand

What ever happened to the good old adventure game? I don't think a single, good, vibrant and mentally satisfying adventure game has been released for at least three years! Is this because they don't sell? Or because it's easier for a game company to purchase a secondhand id firstperson shooter engine and make another boring unoriginal addition to the thousands of crappy shooters that have already come out in the last twelve months?

Nixxon

If you want mental satisfaction, look no further than Planescape: Torment. It's an adventure game in RPG disguise.

Open his eyes

Grand Prix 3 would have to be the most disappointing release this year. Sure, it's good. I mean, GP2 was good and they wouldn't go backwards, would they? But four years to come up with a wet track and an animated steering wheel? Oh, come on!

I really wanted to like GP3, and I wanted to enjoy it as much as I disliked all the recent arcade racers with F1 in the title. I want Grand Prix Legends with modern cars and tracks, and GP3 ain't it.

So, can you tell me whether the Nascar game engine is available, and could you perhaps let Geoff Crammond have a copy of GP Legends so that he might work on GP4 knowing what the competition was like two years ago? I'm sure the experience would open his eyes.

Simon Haynes



ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND™



SHIVER ME TIMBERS AND POKE ME OTHER EYE OUT IF IT AIN'T THE FOURTH IN THE CELEBRATED SERIES OF ADVENTURES!

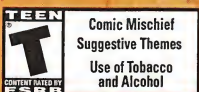
AVAILABLE IN STORES NOVEMBER

Windows 95/98 3D Hardware Accelerator Required Graphic Adventure Single-Play

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REQUIRES
3D
ACCELERATOR



iMUSE
SYSTEM

PC
CD



BYTE SIZE

I am impressed by the new layout of the magazine, but there is one point that lets the side down, the web site. It sucks with a capital S. How about giving this attention as well.

Alan Wilkinson

Today and straight

I received my October issue of PCPP in the mail today and straight away noticed you had a review, world exclusive in fact, of Baldur's Gate 2. I was just thinking to myself how cool it is that PCPP are able to review games that aren't even finished yet!

Stuart Kennedy

After playing the code that Interplay had given him for review, March called Ray and Greg from Bioware the day before deadline to discuss any possible last-minute changes to the game. With only a few tweaks here and there still left to polish off, everyone agreed it was appropriate to publish the review.



Baldur's Gate II: It's not as good as Torment, you know



Grand Prix 3: four years for a wet track?

About the consumer

I know there's not much you can do about this, but I thought I would write to you on behalf of all the SWAT 3 fans out there pissed off because Sierra has decided to not sell Battle Tactics as an add-on pack. Sierra has basically said, "Too bad if you have already bought SWAT 3, you will just have to buy it again."

It sounds to me like they are basically ripping us off blind, encouraging piracy, or they just don't give a rat's ("arse" - Ed) about the consumer who is keeping them in business.

Tony Saliba

Although we understand your frustration, it's not quite that simple. According to Sierra, "To make SWAT 3 multiplayer cost the developer a lot more than they had planned. It ended up having to be a completely new program - not just an add-on. The multiplayer capability is not something consumers can download."

A silly girl

Thanks for finally putting a decent image on the back of the magazine at last. I'd much rather gaze at an Age of Empires II screenshot than a real photo (even if it is a silly girl on a motorbike).



SWAT 3: alone in standing

The back page is a glossy bit of real estate that should be put to good use. How about a different game each month so I can display them with pride in my cubicle? Bye for now, bioelectric cell is depleted, typing augmentation unavailable...

Jason Brown

Sadly, we have no control over who buys ad space in the mag. Well, we do, but not in the way you want. Cool DX reference, though.

Slave monkeys

I just have a few questions.

1. Do you know if Halo is a first or thirdperson shooter?
2. What would you guys want Halo to be?
3. How many words do you have to write to have a byte size?
4. How old do I have to be to work at PC PowerPlay?
5. Have you really got slave monkeys bossing you around?

6. On PCPP#53 p19 you said in Our Most Wanted, "Sprechen ze deutsch" - what does it mean?

7. And finally how many letters do you throw out?

Sean Gabriel

And I have a few answers: both, not fussed, less, old enough not to have to ask, vice versa, ich weiss nicht, and obviously one too few.

Namely multiplayer

I'd just like to thank you for publishing (and Edward Fox for writing) the first decent review of GP3 (or as I prefer GP2.5). I finally get to read a non-biased review that acknowledges that there are problems with this game, namely multiplayer, and that it's not worth the 95+ that most people seem to be giving it. It's good to see that I can still trust your great mag when all other major sources of gaming reviews seem to have been bought off.

Darren Marsh

BYTE SIZE

Reading through PCPP#52 I had this feeling that something was missing. A look at the index confirmed it - no Oracle and no Gameplay section. Just what the hell are you thinking?

Twakered

Ace pilots don't settle for cheap thrills.

Real flying is all about wrestling the raw powers of Mother Nature. Hanging on as you throttle your engines. And relishing the feeling as your wheels kiss the tarmac. You've never felt anything like the new SideWinder® Force Feedback 2 joystick. Using a next-generation processor, it takes technology to the limit by delivering over 100 distinct forces with more speed and strength than ever before. Turning more than 200 force feedback-enabled games into the most intense gaming experience imaginable. So the next time you're ready to push the envelope, you'd better buckle in first.



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www.microsoft.com/sidewinder



A medieval battle scene with a commander leading troops. The commander, wearing a hat and armor, is in the foreground, holding a sword. Behind him, a large group of soldiers in similar armor are marching through a grassy field. The background shows a line of trees under a cloudy sky.

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No matter what anyone says, the trowel is not mightier than the sword. With SideWinder[®] Strategic Commander, you can finally focus on commanding your army. That's because a quick push of a button will order the construction of vast infrastructures. Assemble legions of troops. Delegate entire fiefdoms. Or jump to any spot on the battlefield. Set it up with your keyboard and mouse. Customise it for 72 different chores. And let it do the dirty work so you're free to strategise at the speed of thought. It won't, however, choreograph your victory jig. But we're working on that.



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Server

YOUR CONNECTION TO THE INTERNET

MP3.com hit with fine

THE DIGITAL MUSIC CONFLICT CONTINUES IN THIS NEW SKIRMISH

The screenshot shows the MP3.com homepage with a navigation bar at the top. Below the bar, there are sections for 'New Users', 'Free Music & Charts', and 'MP3.com Highlights'. The 'Free Music & Charts' section lists various music genres like Alternative, Rock, and Electronic. The 'MP3.com Highlights' section features a 'Hands off my music!' campaign and a 'New FREE Single by The Offspring'.

This screenshot displays a legal notice on the MP3.com website. The notice is titled 'Copyright Issues Heat Up' and discusses the company's stance on copyright infringement. It mentions that MP3.com has been sued by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) and that the company is planning to appeal the decision. The notice also includes a section for 'Message Boards' and a 'Legal' link.

There are more legal notices than Mp3s!

In the war between the American record industry and digital music, Universal has won a significant battle. District court judge Jed Rakoff has ruled that MP3.com is liable for up to \$US250 million in fines for copyright infringement. Judge Rakoff concluded that MP3.com should pay up to \$US25,000 for each act of copyright violation against Universal. This is a substantial reduction from the \$US45,000 per infringement that Universal initially sought. Universal has claimed that MP3.com committed 10,000 individual

violations of copyrights held by the music giant. The actual number of infringements, however, will not be determined until the next stage of the trial.

Universal claims that MP3.com breached its copyrights with a service known as MyMP3.com. The service allows consumers online access to digital copies of music that they already own on commercial CDs. The service made headlines from its inception and gained immediate attention from the recording industry. MP3.com was originally sued by all five major music labels - BMG, EMI, Sony, Warner and Universal - but settled with the other four corporations.

The decision may have set a precedent for the upcoming case between the Recording Industry Association of America and Napster. Although the situation is slightly different in that MP3.com actually copied the music and made it available online, while Napster provided the technology to share files but did not publish any copyrighted material itself.

MP3.com plans to appeal the decision. CEO Michael Robertson stated, "We believe that everyone should have the right to listen to the music they purchase, even if it is on the Internet." Since the 'big five' record labels have announced their intention to sue, the MyMP3.com service has been unavailable.



This month represents great potential for growth and expansion... Okay, I'm sounding like a horoscope from a lifestyle magazine. But seriously, net access is on the verge of significant change right now. Worldwide pipelines are being upgraded and broadband access is becoming more accessible. However, price and neutered services are leaving a bad taste in cable and ADSL users' mouths. To help ease the pain we'll tell you how to make the most of what you've got - how to squeeze the best performance out of your humble modem. Digital music continues to be the flavour of the month, both in and out of court. Regardless of the outcome of the David and Goliath battle between the Napster and the RIAA, digital music has become totally mainstream. Following the old idiom that there's no such thing as bad press, Napster's usage has risen almost 400% since the RIAA declared their intention to sue. Turn on, dial in and don't drop out. seb@next.com.au





PING!

FASTER AND CHEAPER ACCESS

The Southern Cross Cable network offering a new high-speed link to the US opens in November. It provides 120 times the bandwidth of the existing link to the States. Prices are already falling on the wholesale level but it may be some time before significant savings are passed onto the consumers.



e-Mile high club

CHECK YOUR EMAIL WHILE STILL IN THE AIR

Singapore Airlines is in the process of testing two inflight email systems using satellite technology. Testing of the first system, which is provided by Tenzing Communications, has already begun. The second system designed by Honeywell will go on trial from mid-December. First class and business class passengers will have the opportunity to test the systems.

Both systems will give passengers access to email and selected websites which will be cached prior to departure. Although inflight email systems already exist in the US, the systems used by some US airlines are only land-based. Singapore Airlines will trial the systems on transpacific flights, making it the first airline to offer such a service outside the US and over water.



The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers

About ICANN | Sponsoring Organizations | Advisory and Board Committees | Organizational Chart | Site Search

ICANN Resources

- Announcements
- At Large Membership
- Calendar of Events
- Contact ICANN
- Correspondence
- Domain Name Dispute Resolution (UDRP)
- Forum for At Large Groups on Nominating and Addressing
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)
- Links
- Notes and Minutes
- Public Comment Forum
- Registrar Accreditation
- Staff Opportunities

ANA Web Pages

New and Noteworthy:

NEW: Names Council Warns Pre-Registration of Speculative New Domain Names is Premature (29 September 2000)

NEW: Details for 13-15 November 2000 Annual Meeting in Marina del Rey, California (24 September 2000)

Status of ICANN's At Large Membership: The membership site features information about the nominees, updated schedule and rules pages, and a **Question & Answer Forum** to enable dialogue. At Large members are encouraged to review the candidate pages and the Q&A Forum. The secure online voting site is now open! Activated At Large members can cast their votes until Tuesday, 10 October (midnight GMT/UTC). (1 October 2000)

Advisory Concerning Register.com v. Verio Litigation (24 September 2000)

New Domains

YOU DON'T NEED TO DOT.COM ANY MORE

The Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers (ICANN) has finished accepting applications for companies wishing to become registrars of the new top-level domains (TDLs). The successful applicants will allocate new TDLs such as .shop for online vendors, .sex for adult material, and .web for entities

emphasising World Wide Web related activities. The exact list of the new TDLs wasn't available at the time of publication.

ICANN hopes to have new names active in early 2001. The introduction of new TDLs has been long awaited by an internet community unsatisfied with current domains dominated by .com, .net and .org.

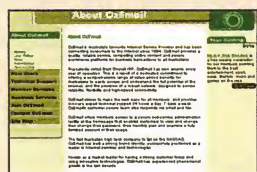
ISP Watch

THIS MONTH: OZEMAIL

This month we look at one of Australia's first ISPs and one that's vying to be the country's largest. OzEmail is a national provider with points of presence (POPs) in all capital cities and major centres. The company was recently unsuccessful in the takeover of eisa and its customer base. Currently OzEmail only offers dialup accounts for home users but has a range of corporate solutions through UUNET.

At the bottom of OzEmail's range is the OzE3 plan with three included hours per month for \$7.95. This plan is only suitable for downloading email but represents good value for such a service. On the more serious end of the scale there are three options - the OzEMegaSaver, OzE250 and OzEShout. All three plans are restricted to certain POPs and the OzEShout is only available in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane and Canberra. The OzEMegaSaver plan offers 150 hours per month for \$37.95 and the monthly fee for the 250-hour OzE250 plan is \$49.95. None of OzEmail's connection plans have download limits. The OzEShout plan is the best value at \$24.95 for completely unlimited access.

New OzEmail customers even get their first three months of access free of charge. The catch? A 12-month commitment or no access for you.



Broadband

IINET LAUNCHES ITS ADSL SERVICE

Perth ISP iiNet has increased its presence in the broadband market with the launch of an ADSL service to complement its existing cable service. The ISP is now one of only four Australian providers to offer ADSL access. iiNet's swift introduction of ADSL represents a welcome change to the usual lag behind the eastern seaboard west coast users have seen in the introduction of high-speed access technologies.

iiNet is offering two different plans. The Voyager ADSL Express is a 256Kbps download/64Kbps upload plan which costs \$85 per month, while the faster 1.5Mbps/256Kbps Voyager ADSL Corporate plan weighs in at \$125. Both plans have a download restriction of 500Mb per month. The installation fee ranges from \$399 for a six-month contract to \$189 for 18 months. This fee includes the required hardware and training.

BigPond Advance cable users have been affected by a virus spreading through the network. The trojan Qaz worm (officially known as W32.HLLW.Qaz.A) only affects users running Windows 95 (or later) on a local area network with shared drives. Other operating systems and dialup customers are not susceptible to the virus.

The Qaz worm alters the Windows registry, replacing Notepad.exe with Note.com. When the program is executed it spreads through the local network doing the same on each system. The virus then automatically

emails the virus host (most likely the virus' author) with the IP address of the susceptible

machine. The virus has been responsible for increased traffic and performance degradation on the network.



machine. The virus has been responsible for increased traffic and performance degradation on the network.

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PC CD-ROM

MICRO PROSE

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Max Out Your Modem

SEB FERN SHOWS HOW TO GIVE YOUR MODEM A THOROUGH TWEAKING

The vast majority of Australians use a modem to connect to the online world. The potential speed increase by switching to broadband is enticing, but while availability is improving the cost is still far too high for most users. A new revision of the V.90 56Kbps standard

is due around the end of the year which promises to increase upload speed to 56Kbps (currently upload speed is limited to 33.6Kbps).

This is a minor upgrade, however, and will make little difference to most applications. Dialup access can be frustratingly slow, so let's look at how to tune your modem to optimum efficiency.

Drivers and Firmware

As with other hardware components, make sure you are using the latest drivers. Newer drivers will fix any compatibility problems and better integrate your hardware with the operating system. The best place to start for drivers is the manufacturer's website.

Just as important as using the latest driver is ensuring you have implemented the latest firmware update. While drivers may contain minor fixes or cosmetic upgrades, a new firmware revision will always improve the functionality of a piece of hardware. You can think of the firmware as the BIOS of the modem - it's what controls the basic communication between the modem and the rest of the system. Often the manufacturer will present a dire warning about the dangers of upgrading the firmware and will insist that the user only continue if absolutely necessary. While it is possible to render hardware unusable with a bad firmware flash, it is very rare, especially with the majority of updates now being self-executable files. The most important firmware upgrade is updating your modem from either of the older incompatible 56Kbps standards, X2 or K56Flex, to the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) standard V.90.

Network Settings

Tweaking the communication settings for optimal modem performance is easiest in Windows 98 and above. For those using an earlier version of Windows or an alternative operating system, the tweaking is a little more hands-on but the basic theory is the same. First we'll concentrate on how to turn your modem into a pocket rocket under Win98 and then cover the general theory so anyone can get the greatest performance from his or her connection.

The following settings will increase performance in most situations. However, if your ISP has given specific instructions for network settings then stick to their recommendations. An ISP that provides such in-depth configuration information generally does so to provide maximum performance on their network.

First of all, the settings for the dialup adapter need to be adjusted for maximum performance. Open the Network applet in Control Panel and highlight the Dial-Up Adapter from the list in the upper pane. Click the Properties button to display (wait for it...) the properties for your dialup adapter. Now, under the Bindings tab, disable all protocols other than TCP/IP (ie. ensure the only protocol with a tick next to it is TCP/IP). Next go to the Advanced tab. Set Enable Point to Point IP to No, unless you wish to receive calls on your modem. IP Packet Size should be set to Large and Record a log file to No. Use IPX header compression should be set to Yes if you mainly use the Internet for web browsing and downloading or No for other primary uses such as gaming.

Once you have confirmed all the above settings click OK. While the Network applet

is open, select the TCP/IP protocol from the list of components (the one pointing to Dial-Up Adapter if you have more than one installed). Again click the Properties button. Go to the DNS Configuration tab and select Disable DNS. Click the WINS Configuration tab and select Disable WINS Resolution.

Finally, go to the Bindings tab and remove the ticks from all the boxes. Accept your changes and close the Network applet. Windows will now want to restart your system - let it.

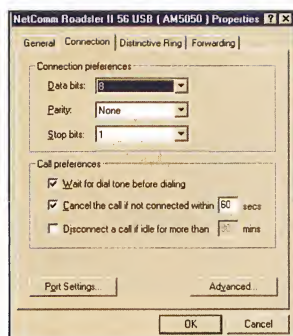
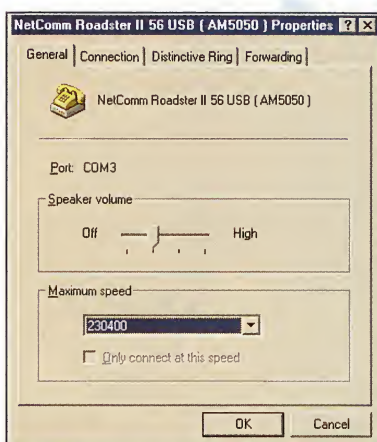
The next step is to open the Dial-Up Networking folder. Bring up the properties for your ISP's connection and click the Server Types tab. In the Advanced Options section put a tick in the Log on to network box. Also, tick Enable software compression unless your primary Internet use is gaming or another latency-sensitive operation, in which case you should disable compression. Ensure that TCP/IP is the only allowed network protocol for faster connection to your ISP.

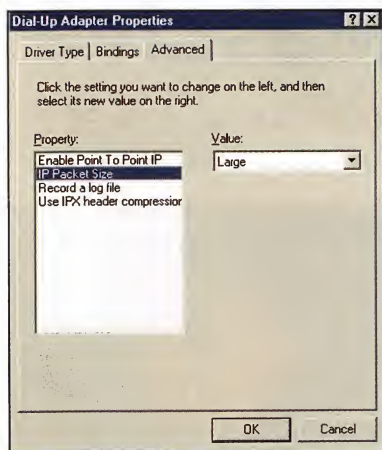
Modem and Hardware Settings

Open the system applet in Control Panel (this can also be achieved by right clicking My Computer and selecting Properties) and click the Device Manager tab. Expand the tree to show your modem by clicking the plus sign next to Modem in the device list. Highlight your modem and click the Properties button. The two areas of concern are the Modem and Connection tabs. Go to the Modem tab and ensure that the maximum speed is at least 115200 and that Only connect at this speed is not selected. Now move on to the Connection tab. Data bits, Parity and Stop bits should already be set to 8, None and 1 respectively, if not adjust these now.

Next click the Port Settings Button. Move the FIFO buffers sliders all the way to the right. If after changing this setting your modem performs incorrectly, go back and reduce the Receive Buffer slider by one notch. Close the Advanced Port Settings window and click the Advanced button. The two top-level options: Use error control and use flow control must be enabled. Below Use error control enable the Compress data option but disable Required to connect as this setting can cause problems when logging in. Under Use flow control select Hardware (RTS/CTS) this is important as selecting Software (XON/XOFF) will use the CPU rather than your modem's purpose-built hardware.

Back in Device Manager expand the Ports branch. Select the port to which your modem is attached and go to its Properties. The Port Settings tab is the only

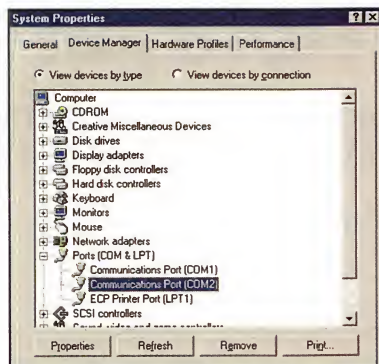




area we're interested in. The settings here should be quite familiar as they are identical to the ones for your modem.

Fortunately the values that we wish to enter are also identical to those that we used for the modem. Here they are in summary: Bits per second - 115200 or higher, Data bits - 8, Parity - None, Stop bits - 1, Flow control - Hardware. Click the Advanced button and put move the FIFO buffer sliders all the way to the right again.

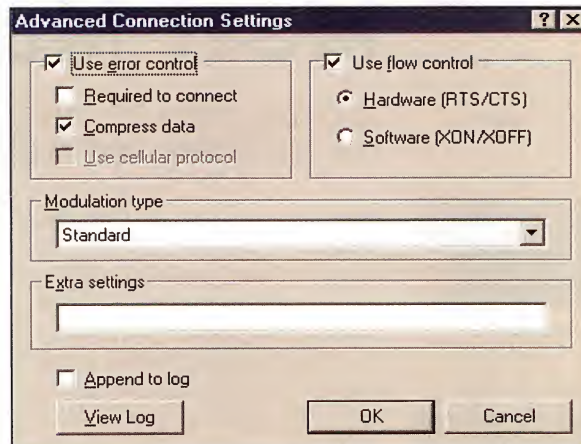
Confirm all the settings, close the System applet and restart Windows. Once the system has restarted your modem will be ready for peak performance.



Theory

Tweaking a modem for top performance is relatively easy in Windows 98 because of much improved TCP/IP software (known as the TCP/IP stack) included in Windows 98 over that in Windows 95. Gaining optimum performance used to involve fine tuning a number of interrelating settings based around the size of the maximum transmissible unit (MTU).

Essentially an optimal MTU setting will prevent information from being broken up during transfer - packet transmission will be optimal. Windows 98 has a feature called MTU Auto Discover which automatically detects the optimum MTU size on connection and derives all other settings from that MTU figure.



It is recommended that you do not use a program that allows you to change your MTU et al because the values will be set permanently in the registry, hence disabling MTU Auto Discover. Win98 actually does an excellent job of fine tuning these settings and also does so based on each individual connection that you make.

We have now pretty much maxed out the performance of the humble modem. Short of adding a V8 and changing the bodywork there is really nothing else left to do with it. Nothing, that is, except pining for broadband.

TWEAKING WITHOUT WIN98

For everyone using an older version of Windows or another OS, the easiest way to optimise MTU and other settings is to download a program such as iSpeed that allows you to adjust the settings from one simple interface. It is also possible to change these settings by manually editing the registry or configuration files but why take the time when iSpeed and similar programs are available as freeware?

Let's cover the settings just in case you're still using Win95 or feel the need to soup up a younger sibling's dinosaur.

Maximum Segment Size (MSS) is the largest amount of data that can be sent in one transmitted unit, the rest is reserved for the header which contains destination information and information to reconnect the packets once they reach their target. This setting is very closely tied with the size of the MTU and should be exactly 40 bits smaller than the optimal MTU.

Receive Window (RWIN) multiplier - determines the number of packets that are transmitted before the data integrity of the transfer is checked by the system. A good rule of thumb is 4x. This multiplier can need to be lowered if there is significant line noise. However, a particularly good connection can warrant a higher multiplier.

Time to Live (TTL) is the number of "jumps" from one server to another that the system will allow before the connection is closed down. A lower value will increase performance slightly whereas a higher setting will allow transmission to and from sites that are experiencing connection problems and need significant rerouting. A setting of 64 is probably a reasonable medium.

Playing around with all these settings can squeeze that little bit extra out of your connection. Don't expect to tweak your modem into anything like cable or ADSL speeds, however.

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The official Everquest site. Receive a warm welcome from Prumpy!



www.lucasarts.com
Stay tuned for developments on Star Wars Online



www.uo2.com
The latest from Origin on, well, Origin. It was so much easier when it was called UO2...



www.microsoft.com/games/zone/asheronscall
Follow the call to the realm of Asheron



www.squaresoft.com
Don't be scared, they do alot more than console games, you know



Meet Multiplayer Massive

VIRTUAL WORLDS ARE EXPANDING OUR PERCEPTION OF GAMING CAN BE. FOR INSTANCE, DANIEL STAINES' ALTER-EGO IS A FEMALE DWARF...

The debut of Origin's Ultima Online in 1997 heralded the birth of a new and exciting genre of gaming which was immediately defined and carved into the mighty pillar of computer-geek jargon: Massively Multiplayer Online Role Playing Game (MMORPG). The term, although somewhat indefinite, is usually used to refer to games which allow the user to participate (via web servers) in a persistent state world or PSW, a veritable online universe in which thousands of gamers can 'live' simultaneously, questing in solitude or in groups or guilds. These worlds exist independently of the user's presence in them and, like the real world, can be affected by those that populate it to a substantial degree.

That sounds rather esoteric to those of us new to the genre, so to make it easier to understand, think of multiplayer Quake. Now, get a few thousand players, replace the maps with one vast, self-contained world, add some dwarves, say 'thou' a lot more, and there you have it - MMORPG. A genre which some would argue has its origins in the blood-drenched Battlenet servers of Diablo and is now heading in directions which are, quite frankly, astounding. Think entire galaxies to be explored. Think servers capable of handling one million-plus gamers. Think immense popularity. Think the future.

Could you be Boba?

Think the future which includes one of the most anticipated games in the history of computer entertainment - Star Wars Online. Developed by Verant, maker of EverQuest, Star Wars Online is already guaranteed to be a best seller - and quite possibly the geekiest game ever invented (not that that's a bad thing). Details, although sketchy, seem to point to the availability of several races available for play, a vast expansive universe to travel in and the inclusion of several Star Wars mainstays as non-player characters (Boba Fett! Boba Fett!). Combine this with a snazzy 3D engine and you've got a marketing cashcow to potentially rival Diablo II.

Mr Lucas and Verant shouldn't be getting too comfortable though, as Star Wars Online won't be uncontested in its pursuit for the crown. Indeed, the previously mentioned Ultima Online and its creator, Origin, are currently in the process of creating the sequel to the grandfather of all MMORPGs - Ultima Online 2. Details remain vague but, according to Origin's official site, the world of UO is at last going to be brought into the realms of 3D with an entirely new graphics engine which will be complemented by artwork from Spawn creator Todd McFarlane. Keeping this in mind, and the fact that UO2 will retain the popular 'shard' server system of its predecessor, it appears that Origin's latest effort might be its finest



to date and a definite contender in the online fantasy stakes.

Surprisingly however, it appears the biggest challenger to Verant's current and future monopoly over the MMORPG market is not even a primary PC developer. Does the name SquareSoft ring any bells for anyone? That's right, Final Fantasy XI - Online. A game that will not only incorporate many elements of the immensely popular series into an online format, but one that is also being touted as the only cross-platform RPG on the market, allowing PlayStation 2 and PC owners to play simultaneously in the same game universe. Considering this and the possibility of incorporating the somewhat distanced Asian market into the world of online RPG gaming, FFXI looks to be something of a success already.

Ye olde school

But, while salivating over the prospect of getting to play as Darth Vader or Rinoa Heartilly, don't forget the already existing range of more than worthy MMORPGs out there, namely EverQuest, Ultima Online and Asheron's Call. Currently, the uber-popular EverQuest is still king of the heap, with a reported 31,000+ players registered and

Scars of Velious will obviously feature very small igloos



WHAT'S IN A NAME?

Given the demographic that play MMORPGs - ie. socially inept teenage males - it is probably best, if you're a lady, *not* to slap yourself with a moniker that will encourage constant harassment by knights wanting to play a bit of mattress joust with you. Instead of calling yourself Lady Lust or something, why not try: Nymph of the Diseased Genitals, Lady Hasnotits or, my personal favourite, Roseanne.



with a new expansion titled Scars of Velious on the way. Velious promises to be a worthy expansion indeed, with an expanded graphic engine based on the Ruins of Kunark model and several new weapon classes being promised.

This is interesting, as it appears that while Verant is quite eager to continue expanding and refining its masterpiece, competitor Turbine (makers of Asheron's Call) seems quite content to let its flagship product stay as it is. Very few updates have been announced for AC since July and, despite its ever growing fanbase, it appears

that there are no new major expansions planned for it any time soon.

Ultima Online, though showing its age more and more, continues to pull huge amounts of RPG fanatics. Origin has recently announced the upcoming external test for the previously mentioned sequel still currently in the development. To coincide with this, and to keep player interest peaked, in November Origin will be holding a 'World's Faire' in Austin, Texas. This will be a large Ultima convention where RPG gamers can meet, mutter uncomfortably while blushing and looking at the floor and then

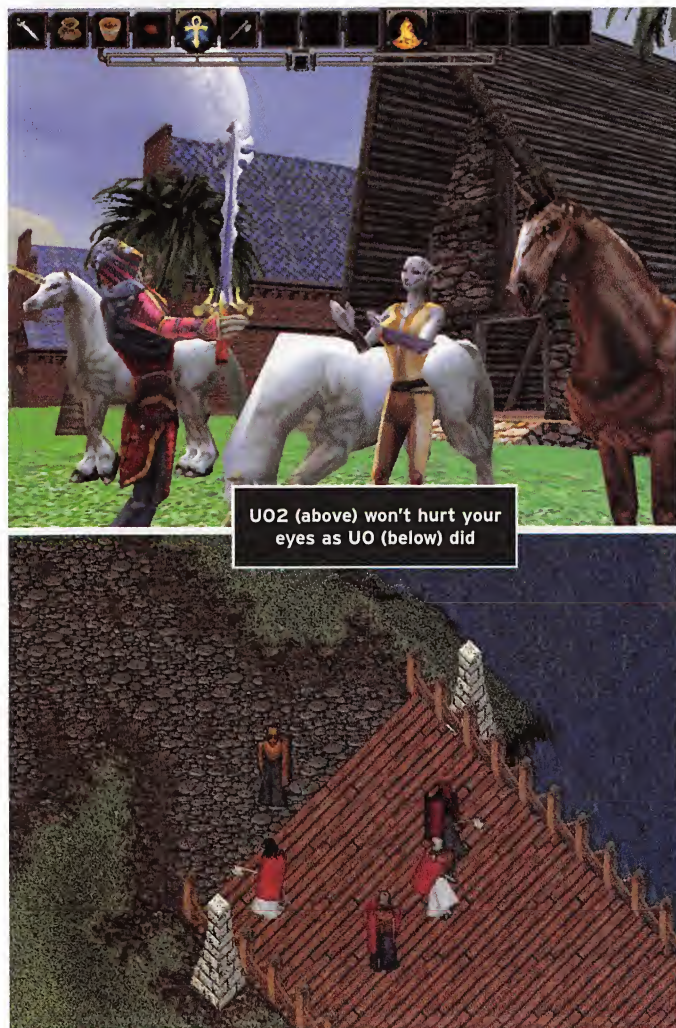
FIRST BORN

Before playing any of the western based MMORPGs, it might be a good idea to go out and get yourself a copy of the game that started it all - Akalabeth. Published in 1980, this was Richard 'Lord British' Garriott's first attempt at an RPG. It is, of course, absolute rubbish today.



go home, strengthened in their resolve to never, ever talk to actual people again.

Of course, I jest. With the advent and popularisation of MMORPGs, no longer are RPGs the domain of dice tossing, ghoulishly thin social rejects. In fact, regardless of who you are and what you like, MMORPGs are undoubtedly a force to be reckoned with in the gaming world. In fact, some would argue, owing to their immersive nature, immense interaction and inherent appeal to social instincts, they could not only be seen as a pinnacle of modern online gaming but also the future of it as well.



COWS GO MOO. CATS GO MEOW. GAMES GO CHEAP.



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SPOONMAN'S LAN DIARY

JUST SHOOT ME

Location: Melbourne VIC
Dates: 6/11/2000 - 7/11/2000
Players: up to 50
Cost: \$15
Web: justshootme.ath.cx

Just Shoot Me is a new LAN in Melbourne, it's still quite small, but still offers great value for the attendee. There is no mention of food supplied on the website so I assume you'd have to bring your own. You also need to bring your own CAT5 cable but if you don't own one you can buy one for \$5. The network is also good and fast for lightning game playing. Definitely a LAN to look out for.

V-LAN

Location: Bowral NSW
Dates: 11/11/2000 - 12/11/2000
Players: 40
Cost: \$15
Web: www.vlan.cjb.net

Who'd have thought the home of Don Bradman would have produced something else of immense value? Well they have and V-LAN proves it. V-LAN is the self proclaimed LAN for the southern highlands and should certainly live up to expectations, they even have the local council's support. For your \$15 you even get 1/2 a pizza and a drink, and you don't need to bring any network equipment either.

MAXX HANGTIME

Location: Melbourne VIC
Date: 5/1/2001
Players: 50
Cost: \$10
Web: members.dingoblue.net.au/~dnite

MAXX Hangtime is another n a long, long list of Melbourne LANs. They seem to put a bit of an emphasis on realtime strategy gaming which would be a breath of fresh air for people with over exposure to Counter Strike. You do need to bring your own cabling but everything else is provided for you. MAXX Hangtime is only a new LAN but like many others promise big things in the future.

Coming soon we promise to bring you the latest news on what could be the world's biggest LAN, held right here in Australia, and the best part is you don't need to be all in one place to enjoy it. Will this be the first LAN to cross all borders? Stay tuned.

For submissions, email spoonman@next.com.au

MOD LIFE

SPOONMAN'S MONTHLY ROUNDUP OF ALL THE LATEST MOD NEWS

RTS QUAKE

For: Quake 3 Arena CTF
Developer: Super K
URL: www.planetquake.com/oz/rtsquake
Release: Current Beta

RTS Quake uses any CTF map and turns it into a base-building, realtime strategy game. It's quite a lot like Warcraft in that your workers go and collect money and bring it back to the base, so you can then afford to build new buildings and create better weapons and attacking classes. Definitely one to look out for.

CHAOS UT

For: Unreal Tournament
Developer: Chaotic Dreams
URL: www.planetunreal.com/chaotic
Release: Current Beta



Chaos UT will be very similar to Chaos DM released for Quake 2. Chaotic Dreams has done a very good job modifying and adding new weapons that make the game more interesting, but still keep gameplay balanced. Some great features including the Bastard Sword, which is useful in defence and attack, and also a Kamikaze move, although you can't use it until you've got ten rockets. Overall, a good alternative to standard UT.

ARG!

For: Half-Life
Developer: Team Arg!
URL: www.planethalflife.com/arg
Release: TBA



Well, well me hearties, it's time for a pirate romp in the form of Arg! for Half-Life. That's right, swing that broadsword and throw those gunpowder filled coconuts. Arg! is a frivolous little mod that Captain Hook would probably turn his nose up at. I however would not. All new weapons, maps and outstanding pirate features make this a must download.

CLASSIC QUAKE ARENA

For: Quake 3 Arena
Developer: Milk Industries
URL: www.planetquake.com/milk/classic/index.html
Status: Released



It's been said by many a gameplayer that games these days still don't quite meet the standard of gameplay that the great Quake offered in its simple, yet compelling structure. This Mod gives that classic gameplay you remember from years ago with the sleek Quake 3 Arena Engine. How can this be a bad thing? Well, in my eyes it can't, at all. As you've probably guessed by even looking at the name, Classic Quake Arena is a Mod for Quake 3 Arena which basically converts it back into the original Quake Deathmatch. Great lengths have been taken to ensure its likeness to the original, the only real difference is in some of the models. The weapon models, while still centred, have been revamped as have the item models (health, etc). Everything else remains the same, no add-ons, no new weapons, nothing, just vanilla Quake, because that's the way we like it.



Internet Distribution

BATTLEFRONT.COM BREAKS THE MONOPOLISTIC STRANGLEHOLD OF THE BIG BOYS

Best described as a turn-based, simultaneous-execution 3D simulation of WWII tactical warfare, *Combat Mission: Beyond Overlord* may very well be the title that saves the dying strategic wargame genre. Created by independent developer, Big Time Software, *Combat Mission* is distributed exclusively over the internet by Battlefront.com. Although this method of distribution complicates matters somewhat, Battlefront.com's intentions are truly admirable. Tired of seeing developers being ruthlessly exploited by the industry's largest publishers and distributors, Battlefront.com now publish and distribute games themselves, albeit under conditions extremely favourable to the developers. Rather than receiving a minute percentage of the profits, developers who distribute their product through Battlefront.com receive a majority stake of all sales revenue. This allows the developers to continue making quality titles, without pressure from above to pump out the next 'big hit'.

Battlefront.com also offers a detailed selection of reference material covering everything from military history to Army

Field Manuals, and their forums have registered over 14,000 posts. The community spirit that pervades the site makes it a haven of quality gaming and interesting information for wargamers everywhere. If this method of distribution proves successful, it is likely that other developers will jump on the bandwagon, and independent distributors adopting similar practices may quickly crop up. Obviously, this would be a very good thing, and may well be the way of the future. If you haven't already done so, you can fire up the awesome *Combat Mission* demo located on the PCPP#53 coverdisc. Incidentally, we'll be putting the full version of the game through its paces next issue.



NGN Poll

In PCPP#53 we asked "Does The Sims Online appeal to you? What features would you like to see Maxis include?"

Since then, it has been officially confirmed that The Sims is indeed going online. Your response was overwhelming positive, even if the motivation was a little dubious.

Here are your thoughts:

I don't think The Sims Online is a great idea. I'm spending too much time online as it is, the telephone bills would go skyhigh!

Alyssa Weskamp

I have to say that this could be potentially the biggest online game ever. Just to think that I could make friends with a real person instead of a bot. I just wonder how the system would work, what would happen when you log off? Would your house be for sale again? But I really don't care how it works as long as long as it's out soon.

Vincent Nil

All I play online is Nascar 3, mainly due to budget restraints. But anything of The Sims appeals to me, even online play. Especially if they include nudie bars, strip clubs, whorehouses and porno cinemas for the voyeurs, but I am confident they won't consider these. So, how about the old footy match, a pub crawl, rock concerts and a day at Maslins Beach plus other nude beaches like Bondi (Eh? - Ed). All I need now is for my buddies at PCPP to send me a copy of the game so I can get some practice and grab that nude patch. Hey, I can dream can't I?

ROM

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ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS A NEW PC



BUYING A COMPLETE PC SYSTEM PACKAGE IS THE SIMPLEST WAY TO UPGRADE. WHY RUN AROUND TRYING TO TRACK DOWN ALL THOSE DIFFERENT COMPONENTS WHEN YOU CAN GET THE LOT IN JUST ONE BOX? BUT THAT DOESN'T MEAN IT'S A PIECE OF CAKE EITHER, AS SEBASTIAN FERN EXPLAINS...

When buying a package PC finding out exactly what will be inside your gleaming new rig is not necessarily an easy task. There was a time when you had to rely on the printed advertising material and the (not entirely knowledgeable) salesperson unless you were prepared to contact someone at the company who could answer your questions.

Thankfully, due to Internet sales and greater flexibility in system configuration, going to the website of the vendor should be enough to find out detailed information about the major components. If you want to know everything about your system, however, the phone is the only option and significant patience can be necessary.

Why would you need to know what's under the bonnet if the system has been pre-built and runs correctly? Upgrades. Sooner or later everybody will want to upgrade his or her software or hardware. New drivers are probably the first upgrade any user makes and can be very important. For example, Nvidia's latest set of drivers increase performance by up to 50%. Why miss out on

new features and functionality just because you don't know what you're upgrading?

CHECK THE SMALL PRINT

System manufacturers offer fairly similar systems that are often differentiated by only a few components. Major differences can exist, surprisingly enough, in the videocard that's included. While one manufacturer may bundle the latest card as a selling point another can slip in an older, less powerful card and play it down in the advertising. Now you'll have no trouble upgrading to the latest card at the time of purchase with such a system, it's just that you'll be charged a premium above the price of the base model. The monitor is also a differentiating factor. To reduce total system cost manufacturers may

bundle a 15-inch monitor whereas others will offer 17-inch screens as standard.

Beyond the visual subsystem it can be hard to see differences in storage devices or speakers but the divide can be rather considerable. What it comes down to is deciding what you want to do with your system and how critical a given component is. If all that you want to do is install applications and play music from CDs, any optical drive will fit your needs. If, however, you wish to encode digital music the quality and speed of the CD drive suddenly becomes very important.

Knowing what's included in a system is definitely important, but after a while the law of diminishing returns set in. The purchase of a package PC will always involve some sort of trade-off. Generally the well-known manufacturers will include new, high quality components; you may find a bargain with a local store but check the warranty and support policy before you buy and don't get burnt.





COMPAQ

PRESARIO 7000



WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

Processor	Intel Pentium III 800MHz
Chipset	Intel 815E
RAM	128Mb 133MHz SDRAM
Hard disk drive	30Gb Ultra DMA
Graphics card	Nvidia TNT2 M64 Pro
Video RAM	16Mb
Monitor	17 inch Compaq
Optical drive(s)	8x DVD, 4x4x24 CD-RW
Sound card	Creative 1373 Sound Blaster
Speakers	JBL Platinum
Modem	56Kbps ITU V.90

Compaq has differentiated its products from the sea of beige for some time now. Initially the company changed the shape of its systems to a curvier, more aesthetic machine then added expansion ports on the front to make connection of USB and other peripherals even easier. Now with the latest Presario range, including the Presario 7000 we reviewed, Compaq has decided to add some colour. The addition comes in the form of colour faceplates, similar in concept at least, to those you can buy for a mobile phone. The faceplates are easily removable and come with matching speaker grills and a smaller plate

monitor. Included is an Nvidia TNT2 M64 Pro. The quality of the card is excellent but not suited to a high-end PC. 3D games, especially firstperson shooters (FPS) won't perform to the expected level. The included 17-inch monitor is a competent offering but doesn't amaze with its visual quality.

VIDEO EDITING

Other than the videocard, Compaq has future-proofed the Presario 7000 very well. The system comes with an 8x DVD drive and decoder software and a 4x4x24 CD-RW drive.

video-editing machine, comparable in terms of the hardware with the iMac DV.

The Presario 7000 produces excellent sound thanks to a Soundblaster card from Creative and speakers from JBL, a manufacturer better known for its excellent quality in the hi-fi market. The Creative card is not the Soundblaster Live! but rather an OEM product known only by its model number, 1373. For anyone but those who compose their own digital music, the card is completely satisfactory with comparable sound quality to the Live! and support for Creative's Environmental Audio. The system also comes with a standard PCI V.90 compliant modem. As a bonus, Compaq is including a Logitech Quickcam Pro.

Overall the Presario is a very well built machine of the highest quality. Compaq has traditionally been on the higher end of the PC cost scale, and the price of the system seems a little high given the aging graphics card that is included. Then again, you get what you pay for and Compaq provide products of the utmost quality with excellent service and an on-site warranty.

THE HARD DRIVE WILL PROVIDE AMPLE ROOM FOR APPLICATIONS AND A SIGNIFICANT DIGITAL MUSIC COLLECTION

for the Internet keyboard. The splash of colour is certainly a very welcome change to the beige box, but it's the guts of the system that really matter, so let's get dissecting.

FAST PROCESSOR

Very little can be said about the processor and RAM setup. Most systems are based on Intel's processors, and while an 800MHz PIII is not on the bleeding edge, it is still a very fast processor. The 133MHz Front Side Bus (FSB) has made quick inroads into the market and thus the included RAM is PC133. 128Mb is becoming the standard amount of RAM available on performance systems and given the continuing high prices for memory, systems are unlikely to ship with much more for the time being. The hard drive will provide ample room for applications and a significant digital music collection. 30Gb may sound overly generous now, but within a short period of time the added space will be appreciated.

The Presario's graphics subsystem is a little disappointing, let down by the videocard as opposed to the

The most interesting feature of the Presario 7000 is the inclusion of two Firewire (IEEE 1394) ports. Firewire is used for connecting digital video (DV) cameras and other high-speed devices. With the DV software included in Windows Me, the system could be used as a



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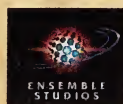
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DELL

DIMENSION 4100



WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

Processor	Intel Pentium III 800MHz
Chipset	Intel 815E
RAM	28Mb 133MHz SDRAM
Hard disk drive	30Gb Ultra DMA
Graphics card	Nvidia GeForce2 GTS
Video RAM	32Mb
Monitor	Dell 1226H 19 inch
Optical drive(s)	12x DVD
Sound card	Creative Sound Blaster Live! Value
Speakers	Altec Lansing ACS340
Modem	56Kbps Data/Fax PCI

Dell's newest system in its Dimension range is based on the i815E chipset (as are the other systems in this review) and represents a new push by the company to stretch the barrier of price to performance. The system comes with the same processor and RAM configuration as the Compaq system. Where Compaq has focused on individualising its machines, it's almost as if Dell wants its systems to remain anonymous. The only distinctive visual feature of the Dimension 4100 is the LED Diagnostic display system. The system is made up of four LEDs which illuminate in different patterns in the event of a system failure letting the user know what has gone wrong. A similar system exists on MSI motherboards, but the LEDs are not external.

HIGH PERFORMANCE

Beyond the predictable but sturdy and user-friendly (think thumbscrews) exterior is a high performance system that skimps on absolutely nothing it provides. The 30Gb Ultra DMA hard drive is one of the faster drives available, spinning at 7200rpm. The Dimension 4100 also provides a 12x DVD drive.

Where the Compaq failed to impress, the Dell system far surpassed our expectations. The graphics subsystem is made up of the latest Nvidia GeForce2 GTS videocard and a 19-inch monitor. In combination with the quick hard drive and solid performance of the i815E chipset, the graphics performance of the Dimension 4100 blows away both the Compaq and the Gateway. While the other two systems provide 17-inch monitors, Dell goes the extra mile and bundles a 19-inch monitor. On paper the difference in screen size seems negligible, but the difference between using each device is phenomenal.

The sound system of the Dimension is really strong, matching its excellent video offering. The soundcard is also provided by Creative, but is this time the industry standard Soundblaster

Live! Value. The Altec Lansing ACS340 speakers can claim the same quality or lineage as the JBLs bundled with the Compaq Presario, and the inclusion of a subwoofer is a definite plus. Like the Compaq and the Gateway systems, the Dell Dimension 4100 comes with an internal 56Kbps V.90 modem.

Pentium III and an 8x4x32x CD-RW drive (\$300 for the processor upgrade, \$380 for the recordable CD). This would create a slightly cheaper system than the Gateway (\$4579) and a slightly more expensive comparable system to the Compaq (\$4279). Both these upgrade options, however, include the

WHILE THE OTHER TWO SYSTEMS PROVIDE 17-INCH MONITORS, DELL GOES THE EXTRA MILE AND BUNDLES A 19-INCH

PRICE DIFFERENCE

The difference in price between the Dell and the other two systems reviewed is quite significant, the Dell vying for \$300 less than the Compaq Presario 7000 and a sizeable \$700 less than the Gateway Performance 866. At first glance this seems to be accounted for by the lack of inclusion of a recordable CD drive and in the case of the Gateway system, the fact that the Dimension comes with a slower processor. Yet for \$680 you can upgrade the Dell to an 866MHz

superior graphics setup - a reasonable step-up from the Gateway system and a significant performance improvement over Compaq's offering.

Dell has really impressed with the Dimension 4100. The system provides top-notch performance and excellent value. Dell has shown that they want to be the price leaders in the packaged PC market. The icing on the cake is the 3 year on-site warranty.

\$3899



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GATEWAY

PERFORMANCE 866

Gateway, or Gateway 2000 as the company was known when it first started operations in Australia, has created systems based on high performance brand name components for the longest of any other packaged PC vendor. Due to this, Gateway has long been a favourite with gamers. Gateway and Dell have fought it out over the last couple of years, catering to gamers needs, the small office/home office (SOHO) market and business users. Gateway's latest offering, the Gateway Performance 866, is a high performance machine based on the Intel 815E chipset.

BRAND QUALITY

As with the other systems included in this review, the Performance 866 ships with a 30Gb hard drive. The system's DVD drive weighs in at 12x, on par with the Dell Dimension 4100. The Gateway Performance 866 also comes with an 8x4x32x CD-RW drive and formatted media. The Gateway people actually mention in their advertising material that a Phillips drive is provided; evidently they want us to know that they have included quality brand-name components.

The graphics card provided with the Gateway system is an Nvidia GeForce 256

WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

Processor	Intel Pentium III 866MHz
Chipset	Intel 815E
RAM	128Mb 133MHz SDRAM
Hard disk drive	30Gb Ultra DMA
Graphics card	Nvidia GeForce 256
Video RAM	32Mb
Monitor	Gateway VX720 17 inch
Optical drive(s)	12x DVD, Phillips CD-RW
Sound card	Creative Sound Blaster Live! Value
Speakers	Boston Acoustics BA735s
Modem	56Kbps Data/Fax

Quake III and 3Dmark 2000 when comparing the Gateway to the Dell. The 17-inch monitor was crisp and bright but seemed to be missing two inches.

SOUND

The sound capabilities of the Gateway Performance 866 and the Dell Dimension 4100 are almost identical. Both systems incorporate the Soundblaster Live! Value and the Boston Acoustics BA735s speakers bundled with the Performance 866 are very similar in sound and function to the Altec Lansing set included with the Dimension. No system would be complete without a modem and Gateway has joined the pack by including an internal PCI 56Kbps V.90 compliant modem.

The Gateway Performance 866 is an excellent system and one that is well worth considering. It is made up of high quality components and is a system that can be easily upgraded. The Performance 866 lives up to its name.

WHILE THE I815E CHIPSET IS AN EXCELLENT NEW OFFERING, IT'S A PITY WE'RE NOT SEEING SYSTEMS BASED ON ATHLON TECHNOLOGY

The system includes 128Mb of 133MHz SDRAM and a Pentium III 866, one step up from the 800MHz processors offered in the Compaq and Dell systems. While the i815E chipset is an excellent new offering, it's a pity that we are not seeing more systems based on Athlon technology. In fact, this is a criticism of all package PC vendors, not just Gateway. The reduced cost of Duron and even Thunderbird processors compared to Intel's offerings represent the opportunity for great savings but are only being passed on to DIY system builders in the majority of cases.

32Mb card. This is the card range that is more commonly found in package PCs and is still a very strong performer. Had the Dell not blown us away with what was included with the Dimension 4100 we probably would have been quite impressed with what the Gateway is capable of. Unfortunately memory is just long enough to notice the framerate drop in

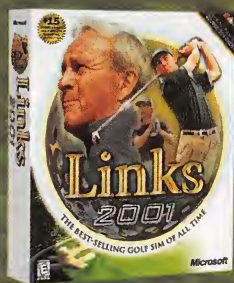
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ACTUAL
SCREEN SHOT OF
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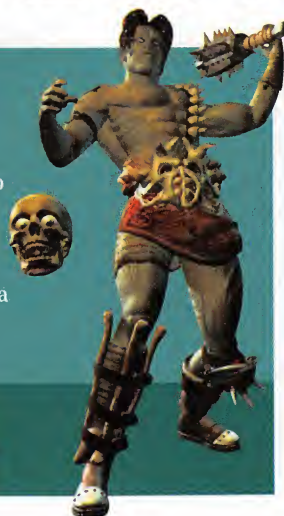
Microsoft.com/games/links2001

Microsoft



STOCKING FILLERS

No new PC system would be complete without a selection of the latest and greatest games to play. If anything, it's always immensely satisfying to be able to boast to your mates about the stupidly high resolutions in which you now play those old games. With Christmas just around the corner, here's a few titles to a put on a shortlist for Santa:



DEUS EX 98% in PCPP #51

Developer Ion Storm
Publisher Eidos
Distributor Ozisoft

What we said then "From the interior of an enormous 747 to the abandoned New York subway, the game's locations are realised in uniformly exceptional detail. Complementing this is the bewildering and diverse array of objects with which Denton can interact. This is a world just buzzing with things to touch and fiddle around with."

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND 90% in PCPP #55

Developer LucasArts
Publisher LucasArts
Distributor EA

What we said then "From the scripted sections to the dialogue to the gags to the stupid but strangely logical puzzles, this is the Monkey Island that we know and love. The more stylised and overtly cheesy attitude of Curse of Monkey Island is continued here in glorious 3D."

FLIGHT UNLIMITED III 89% in PCPP #43

Developer Looking Glass
Publisher EA
Distributor EA

What we said then "Flight Unlimited III focuses its attention on only one city - Seattle, USA - providing the most realistic environment in any domestic flight sim available. The immersion and depth of reality contained within the game is impressive to say the least."

MIDTOWN MADNESS 2 82% in PCPP #54

Developer Angel Studios
Publisher Microsoft
Distributor Microsoft

What we said then "Racing is infinitely more thrilling when the lives of innocent road users and pedestrians, and millions of dollars worth of private and public property are seemingly at stake. A very, very sweet, racing adventure."



PLANESCAPE: TORMENT 91% in PCPP #46

Developer Black Isle
Publisher Interplay
Distributor Interplay

What we said then "The Nameless One lies dead on a slab, tormented by nothing more tangible than visions and memories, locked in his own corpse and unable to die. Planescape: Torment was created... with an extremely mature philosophy where ethics and behaviour control the universe, and belief and faith are more powerful than any spell or sword."

FINAL RECOMMENDATION

Dell Dimension 4100

With the highest graphics performance and the biggest screen, it comes as a bit of a surprise that this is the least expensive system in the roundup. Dell has thrown down the gauntlet to other manufacturers and for the moment at least its deal with this machine cannot be dethroned. There's almost no chance of a price war in the packaged PC market but its good to see Dell keeping things competitive. Both the Compaq Presario 7000 and the Gateway Performance are excellent machines; it just so happens that the Dell Dimension 4100 is better.

QUAKE III: ARENA 93% in PCPP #45

Developer id Software
Publisher Activision
Distributor Activision

What we said then "Quake III: Arena is all about one thing - hard and fast multiplayer action and fragging the hell out of your opponents. Or as it says so helpfully in the manual: "Frag Everything That Isn't You."

THE SIMS 90% in PCPP #47

Developer Maxis
Publisher EA
Distributor EA

What we said then "Maxis simply calls the game a people simulator, but really, that's about as useful a description as calling life a Great Big Game. The Sims is an interesting concoction made up of strategy and roleplaying elements, with a bit of philosophy and the glorious randomness of luck thrown in for good measure. A completely unique game."

THIEF II: THE METAL AGE 95% in PCPP #49

Developer Looking Glass Studios
Publisher Eidos
Distributor Ozisoft

What we said then "Although virtually all aspects of Thief II: The Metal Age have been given impeccable treatment, it is the mission design that is its ultimate strength. Players are forced to keep their wits about them, pay close attention to their surrounds and adapt accordingly. Thief II: The Metal Age is an exceptional piece of work."

Last night, she shot you down. TODAY, IT'S YOUR TURN.



*Big guns.
Fast planes.
Gorgeous dames.*



The 1930s ain't what they used to be. America lies in pieces and air power is king. It's a shoot-or-get-shot-down world. You'll dogfight ruthless air pirates. Rescue saucy pinups. Dodge flak from dicey femmes fatales. And mix it up with other aces online.

But remember, one thing still holds true — don't get mad, get even.

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Fly 11 tricked-out planes in 24 thrilling missions.



Customise your wings with rockets, machine guns & more.

Return to Castle Wolfenstein

GENETIC ENGINEERING? MUTANT ZOMBIE NECRO-NAZIS?
JUST WHAT ON EARTH IS ID SOFTWARE THINKING?
RYAN HOVINGH ATTEMPTS THE GREAT ESCAPE...



Well, she's one genetic experiment the Nazis actually got right...



Obviously one improvement upon the original is the player's ability to look up and down. And, hey, so can the enemy troops!

In the future, historians will look upon today's times as a period of renewal. The radio reeks of revamped music and the cinemas abound with new versions of old movie titles. Even old toys and games are going through the same processes, and PC games are no exception. Sequels to the timeless *Diablo* and *Dark Reign*, for example, have hit the shelves this year and other titles are well on their way - not the least of which being *Return to Castle Wolfenstein*.

While developer Gray Matter Studios is a new name on the gaming frontier, many of its members come from the well-known stock of Xatrix Entertainment, creator of the infamous *KingPin* and *Redneck Rampage*. As *Wolfenstein* is based around the *Quake III* engine, id Software has also had its fair share of input in an effort to ensure the new game is a quality title.

Keeping an eye on the Nazis

According to Gray Matter's Creative Director, Drew Markham, *RTCW* will be a re-interpretation of the original *Wolfenstein* 3D and not, as expected, a true sequel. As the two timelines will overlap, the storylines between *RTCW* and the original *Wolfenstein* are very similar. BJ Blazkowicz, the central character, escapes from his World War II prison and is recruited into the OSA, a special agency established to deal with Hitler's more twisted and perverted war plans. These terrible schemes are watched over by the evil Heinrich Himmler, who has been experimenting with genetics and raising the dead in order to create the perfect

necro-Nazi. Luckily, the undead rise against their masters and BJ is able to take advantage of the ensuing confusion...

One of the main hurdles Gray Matter had to overcome was maintaining a cohesive storyline while seamlessly incorporating Nazis, fantasy creatures and cyborgs into *RTCW*. However, Markham feels that things are going smoothly: "The player is constantly drawn further in to the more bizarre aspects of the Nazis' plans and projects. The last revision of the storyline and thematic elements has really brought all of this together in a way that we are very happy with."

Despite the complex storyline, *Return to Castle Wolfenstein* will not be an exercise in

roleplaying like *Deus Ex* or even *Half-Life*. The developers are adamant that they will focus on the 'shooter' aspects of *RTCW* by concentrating on better enemy AI and scripting innovations to maintain (yet surpass) the original action element of *Wolfenstein 3D*. To do so, they have learnt from their experiences with *KingPin*.

"This time around, we had to temper our ambitions regarding the design of the game. In *RTCW* we picked a few fundamental gameplay features that we wanted to accomplish, and by keeping that list of features small from the beginning, we never felt overwhelmed by the design", explains Markham. "Now we have a solid foundation in place and we can pick and choose subsequent features that will not cause any nasty ripple effect."

Keeping up with the Jones'

To help create this solid foundation, Gray Matter has elected to base *RTCW* around id Software's well-tested *Quake III* engine, which is renowned for its incredible robustness and remarkable curved surfaces. Of this latter feature, Markham remarks: "Some of the castle interiors have greatly benefited from this technology, and we've also used this feature of the *Quake III* engine for things like sagging electrical cables and railings."



DETAILS

GENRE

Firstperson shooter

MULTIPLAYER

Yes

DEVELOPER

Gray Matter Studios

PUBLISHER

Activision

DUE

1st Qtr 2001

URL

www.graymatter.com



Kingpin demonstrated Gray Matter's love of the flamethrower. Here it looks even better



Markham even made two trips to Europe just so he could grab some digital pictures of stone walls, floors and wood so the new textures will look real. It's hard to imagine that any game of this magnitude can be related to the simple Wolfenstein over 20 years ago. Those who played the original Wolfenstein title will be startled from even a glance at the new screenshots of RTCW - no

more bright blue and red walls (though it must be said that a token blue wall every now and then would be pretty hilarious!).

Apparently, the search for the secret rooms and corridors will no longer be a random spacebar-hitting affair. "Secrets were one of the big things that people remember from the original Wolf, and there will be plenty of them in RTCW, although you won't have to 'spacebar' every wall that you see to find them!" laughs Markham. "We'll have subtle visual clues this time around."

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT NAZI GERMANY

ADOLF SCHICKLGRUBER?

Adolf Hitler's father was an illegitimate son of Maria Schicklgruber and bore her surname for the first 40 years of her life. He changed it to Hitler later on as a compromise between the surnames of his biological and step fathers - luckily for Adolf. Adolf Schicklgruber doesn't quite have the same ring to it does it? (1)

WHO'S CHICKEN?

Heinrich Himmler, scourge of the Jews, was originally a chicken farmer. Only his passion for violence saw his meteoric rise to infamy during the war. (3)

PROPAGANDA AND THE HOME

During WWII, the Allied OSS (Office of Strategic Services) placed phoney newspaper clippings on German corpses, which were made to look like they had committed suicide. The news clippings contained an announcement from the chicken farmer himself, suggesting that every German wife who had not had a baby in the past two years must report to an SS-run breeding farm and use the nesting boxes provided. Apparently, over 10,000 Germans deserted in response to these and other black-propaganda ploys. (2)

HEAVEN-SENT HUMANS

Strange rumours abounded during World War II. Clergymen reportedly dropped from the sky in Holland and, not to be outdone, nuns were seen parachuting over Scotland. (3)

RUBBER DOLLS

Dark Reign did not invent the idea of decoy buildings and units. In 1943, the British organised a huge campaign of deception to convince the Germans that the main attack was not going to be at Normandy but instead at Pas-de-Calais, directly across the Channel. To do so, fake plywood buildings were constructed, inflatable tanks dispatched and small parachuting dummies were deployed to suggest that the British forces were concentrated in England's southeast. Apparently, the rubber dolls kept German forces occupied for quite some time. (2)

RADAR DEATH RAYS

The radar, arguably the most significant invention of World War II, was originally designed to be a death-ray. Unfortunately, the scientist discovered that the focussed radio rays only bounced off the target and did no damage whatsoever. (2)

Gunning for BJ

Modern gore-hungry gamers will also be happy with the new weaponry list required to mete out retribution to the hapless enemy. No longer are people content with the pistols, uzis, daggers and miniguns of the original Wolfenstein. In RTCW, there is now the option of using bazookas, potato grenades, rocket launchers, flamethrowers and, of course, the sniper rifle. After all, the German swastikas make great little targets to aim your crosshair.

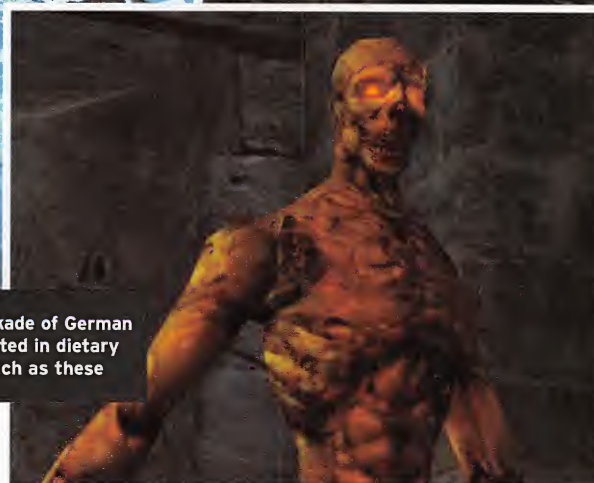
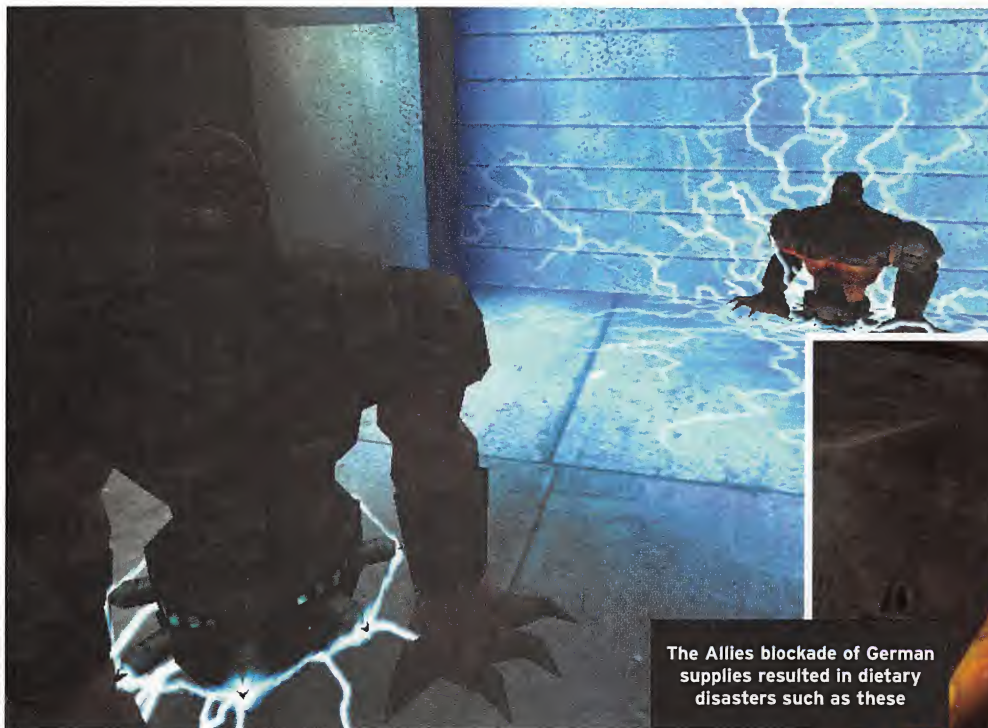
Although these weapons sound awesome, the list doesn't end there. Fixed



Readers Digest 1985 Readers Digest Book of Facts Readers Digest, NSW (1)

Russell, F. et al. 1981 The Secret War Time-Life Books, Illinois (2)

Mercer, D. 1991 Chronicles of the Second World War Jacques international, London (3)



The Allies blockade of German supplies resulted in dietary disasters such as these

gun emplacements can be overrun during the game and used - but rest assured, the enemy is quite able to use them against you too! In addition, the designers have added a few special weapons to the fray, but we do not yet have clearance for this sort of information, so stay tuned...

Thankfully, the target list has grown in proportion to the new weapons. While Gray Matter has been pretty secretive about all this so far, a quick spell under interrogation - aided by only minor torture - revealed some details about the Loper, a creation from the Genetics Research Lab. The Loper is completely armless (though not harmless by any measure), but can headbutt better than Liverpoolian soccer player. It is also armed with a "stim engine," which is used to generate nasty electrical fields and currents to keep BJ moving.

For those of you eager to hear about the multiplayer side of RTCW, you'll just have to wait. Gray Matter is currently deliberating over the various available options and, until the matter is confirmed, we'll just have to wait. However, our cryptographers deciphered some speculation about the possibility of a Counter-Strike style game (an idea I find personally delicious), but this has not yet been confirmed.

Immersion U-Boat style

With the current trend of reinventing the old games, it is no surprise that Wolfenstein has been targeted for renewal. Gray Matter hopes that RTCW totally immerses the gamers in an old World War II environment. The Nazi imagery, Markham feels, helps to do just that. "We use the Nazi imagery in a manner similar to Indiana and the Last

Crusade - it sets the scene but does not glorify the Third Reich in any way." To really set the WWII movie feel, Gray Matter has elected to keep the gore quotient down for fear that it would detract from the overall

effect. "Early on we dispensed with the notion of pain skins, and no one really seems to have missed them."

Upon its release, Return to Castle Wolfenstein will close a decade of PC gaming that its ancestor defined. In bringing the classic Wolfenstein into the 21st century, there is an extraordinary amount of pressure on the Gray Matter team to meet everyone's high expectations. So far, the focus has been clear: immerse the gamer within a rich environment, don't distract them with skill management and give them lots to shoot at. It's hard to see them going wrong with an action plan like that!

WHERE IT ALL BEGAN

Wolfenstein was responsible for large amounts of motion sickness during the early 90s as gamers tried desperately to navigate the ghastly blue and red halls of Castle Wolfenstein. Its storyline was simple - as a captured Allied soldier, you must escape from Castle Wolfenstein by finding treasure, coloured keys, accessing restricted areas and locating the level exits (much like in 3D successors Doom and Quake). Single sided Nazi soldiers jump out at pre-determined locations and yell as they shoot you with an array of pistols, machine guns and mini guns. Of course, there is always the Big Guy at the end of each series - few forget the blonde-haired, blue-bodied cyborg Nazi armed with two mini-guns!

Escaping the Castle, however, is only the first mission. After discovering that the Nazis are undertaking some

weird and gruesome experiments around the country, the hero takes it upon himself to extinguish the evil threat to the world. Even Frankensteins feel the wrath of the gung-ho guerrilla and, eventually, Hitler himself takes a beating.

While Wolfenstein now rests on the bottom shelves of many game libraries, it does serve as a reminder of how far PC gaming has actually come. Small things such as looking up and down, crouching, jumping and tiptoeing are now taken for granted, as are puzzles, movie-quality storylines and enemy AI.

So do yourself a favour. Load up the shareware version of Wolfenstein on this month's CD, play it for a night or two and then give Deus Ex a bash. You'll be amazed. Then consider what Return to Castle Wolfenstein will be like...



Welcome to... Games Mecha

BATTLETECH CREATOR FASA IS PROVING TO BE A SMART ACQUISITION FOR MICROSOFT. **GEORGE SOROPOS** CLAMBERS ABOARD TO INVESTIGATE THEIR FIRST TWO ROBOT TITLES





Now heading into its fourth incarnation, the MechWarrior series has to prove itself again, with yet another driver at the wheel. Activision's MechWarrior 2 is definitely remembered with more fondness than either the first or third installments due to its mix of innovative (at the time) technology and good mission design. With the third iteration, Microprose blew its chance by spending more time designing the promotional coffee mugs than designing the game's singleplayer missions. So where does Microsoft and the programmers at FASA plan to take the franchise now?

Taunt and harass

There has been much discussion centred on the subject of the game's interface and how it will be simplified to make it more accessible. Announcements like that are always guaranteed to arouse the suspicions of devotees, immediately worried by the prospect of playing a PlayStation version of their favourite game. Apparently these fears are unfounded, as FASA has simply taken a multi-layered approach to the interface. "It's all a matter of options," reasons **TJ Wagner**, one of the MechWarrior design team. "All the complexity is there for you to turn on. If you don't want the complexity you don't have to use it."

Probably the biggest criticism leveled at MechWarrior 3 was its obviously rushed singleplayer game. If Microsoft follows that up with more of the same, it will probably be the end of MechWarrior on the PC - and they know it.

"We have an in-depth campaign that is very story-driven," Wagner says. "You won't catch everything first time around. We've tried to make MechWarrior 4 much more like an interactive BattleTech novel than any of the previous games. We will also be releasing a set of tools to allow users to create their own missions to release on the web." To help create this immersive atmosphere, players will also be able to use audio/visual links between them and their enemies to taunt and harass during battle.

Apart from the story elements the design of the missions will give the player more options in choosing tactics. There definitely will be different strategies for success; everything from your choice of Mechs, Lancemates, weapons, time of day, and the weather will effect how you play the mission. What route you take and the tactics you use will determine your success.

Outcroppings ahoy

MechWarrior 3 was also notable for its love of barren desert environments, a sort of Frill Necked Lizard effect caused by lack of blood flow to the map designers' brains.

Activision's Heavy Gear 2 introduced more natural, living environments to the genre and Microsoft plans to take this even further.

"First off, the maps are much bigger and more realistic," begins Wagner. "Hills, mountains, caverns, lakes, and outcroppings are all part of the terrain. You'll see bushes, trees, plants and animals that all fit into the game's various environments." Including the treads on your Mech boots, too. And, Lord how I've laid awake at nights hoping against hope that I would see glorious 3D outcroppings just once before I died.

A popular environmental feature of Mechwarrior 2 was its urban cityscapes. Wagner admits to being a fan of these as well. But will players be able to repeat these adventures in Mech 4?

"Yes! Like you've never seen before," he exclaims. "The city environments right now are the favourite for our office multiplayer games." More than that, these cities will not be like the empty, lifeless places seen in Mech 2, but much more complex areas with high-rise ambush points, vehicle traffic and other features to make things interesting.

Essentially Microsoft and FASA are hoping to recapture the enthusiasm and devotion that fans had to MechWarrior 2, while bringing the franchise up to date with the latest technology, innovative level design and a more involving multiplayer experience. ☛



MECHWARRIOR 4

Mechwarrior 4 is being developed by the same team that designed the original arcade version of Mechwarrior, which featured gigantic cabinets linked together in what was one of the earliest multiplayer-only arcade games. It's expected that Mechwarrior 4 will hark back to the arcade classic and have various multiplayer options built into the final version. MechWarrior 4 uses a unique engine based on libraries from the BattleTech Tesla 4.0 system pods (also known as MUNGA). New particle-generator effects tools, a natural-terrain generation system, a custom animation-blending system, a custom renderer, and tons more will bring you closer to the BattleMech experience than ever before.

DETAILS

GENRE
Big Robot Action

MULTIPLAYER
Yes

DEVELOPER
FASA

PUBLISHER
Microsoft

AVAILABLE
December 2000

URL
www.microsoft.com/games/mechwarrior4



Caught in the middle of a firefight, this captain died an honourable death



(below) Tie washing lines between buildings to trip up enemy mechs



Tactical orbit

The original MechCommander from Microprose was a breath of fresh air to many jaded realtime strategy fans and still stands up very well against much newer games. For those of you who like to watch, MechCommander offered an opportunity to orbit above the battle and control every tactical element of your battles instead of having your butt planted inside one of those walking coffins. It also introduced a much more detailed and interactive gameworld to the Mech series and seemed to lend itself more easily to immersive, story-driven gameplay.

The technological and conceptual leap ahead taken by the designers of MechCommander 2 is much bigger than the one taken by the team responsible for MechWarrior 4. For one thing the previous game's 2D graphics are being replaced with a true 3D engine.

"The fact that we are now playing in full 3D brings such tactical circumstances as LOS (Line of Sight), water and plant life cover, and height advantage just to name a few," designer **Steve Fowler** describes.

It also increases opportunities for cunning plans and tricky tactics, so much a part of the fun of the original. Knock down trees in your way, burn a forest to create a path behind the enemy's location, jump your Mech up a rocky cliff to look into his fortress below. Destroy a bridge to restrict enemy movement. Capture the enemies turret control building and watch his Mech's get cut to pieces by his own defenses. These are just some of the options now available to the tactically-minded player.

Another interesting addition to the game comes in the form of night fighting. According to Fowler, "Night missions greatly increase the realism one feels. A mission may start at just before dusk and finally complete in total darkness. All Mechs will be equipped with headlights for increased viewing, but the LOS radius will be decreased at night."

Unusually, players will also now be able to save games mid-mission, a boon to people who don't like doing things more than once.

There was one aspect of the original MechCommander which seemed rather odd at the time. Even though your command was in orbit, each map was obscured by that nasty black muck that seems to pollute the air in a lot of games. Well, it was there for obvious gameplay reasons, but this time around Microsoft are claiming to have found a way around using this common game cliché.

"Yes, the landscape is viewable with the help of spy satellites," Fowler reveals. "Since the terrain is now rendered in 3D, the commander can use the camera to scout out routes that lend themselves to more strategic attacks. If you find an enemy base and there's a river valley leading up to it this might be a place where the enemy laid a trap, so use your lighter scout Mechs with longer sensors to forge ahead on the ridge to make sure the way is clear." Yet the original game had spy cameras too. So it seems as though the fog of war will still be there, albeit in a different form.

Backbone

The other major difference evident in the sequel is the abandoning of a linear mission structure in favour of one in which the player has more choice over the direction. Fowler explains: "The mission structure in MechCommander 2 no longer follows a linear progression. There will be two types of missions, Node and Normal. The Node missions will be the backbone and storyline for campaign progression. The normal missions are intermediate mission within the Node missions and they can be played in any order."

MechCommander was the best of Microprose's licensed Mech titles and one of the most innovative RTS games ever made. Microsoft has a job on its hands improving on it, but appear to be headed in the right direction and MechCommander 2 could be a contender for RTS of the year.

MECHCOMMANDER 2

The implementation of multiplayer play in MechCommander 2 promises to be one of its' highlights. MechCommander 2 will be playable over the Zone with up to 8 players simultaneously. MC2 improves Multi-play with the addition of cooperative multiplayer, advanced league support, a simplified multiplayer user interface over MC1, a resource/salvage sharing model and custom Mech color schemes. And according to Steve Fowler "The level editor shipped with the product will also be one of the most advanced and user friendly tools available in gaming."

DETAILS

GENRE	Big Robot Strategy
MULTIPLAYER	Yes
DEVELOPER	Microsoft
PUBLISHER	Microsoft
AVAILABLE	1st Qtr 2001
URL	www.microsoft.com/games

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Star Trek Bridge Commander

LIKE SAND THROUGH THE HOURGLASS, THESE ARE THE DAYS OF OUR TREK... **GEORGE SOROPOS** THINKS IT'S ALL LOGICAL

DETAILS

GENRE

Space Combat

MULTIPLAYER

TBA

DEVELOPER

Totally Games

PUBLISHER

Activision

DUE

3rd Qtr 2001

URL

www.bridgecommander.com





The duo at the rear stand well clear of their computer consoles in case they explode



When we finally conquer the stars and discover that all aliens really are just people with funny noses, who will remember the adventures of our noble Trek heroes? Sure Captain Kirk will always be admired for having the biggest log in the fleet but who will be there to read it? Are you kidding? Trek is going to be with us for a long, long time. Homer's Iliad, Dante's Inferno, Pope Pervus IV's Rooting Your Way To God, as odd as it sounds StarTrek could be around for as long as any of them.

With such a long history and 'backstory' as they call it in show business, it isn't surprising there are so many Star Trek licenses around for the different series, nor that some of the titles are similar. At first glance Activision's Bridge Commander seems like an imitation of Interplay's flawed Starfleet Academy and Klingon Academy, but using the Next Generation license (STNG) instead of the original series (TOS). However Activision seems to be devoting more resources to its development and taking a different design approach. The simple fact that **Larry Holland** - the mind behind nearly all of LucasArts' Star Wars space sim titles - is the lead designer of Bridge Commander means that fans are expecting a lot from it. And the million dollar question of course is will it live up to the promise so long offered by the Trek license?

Interactive crew

The first comparison gamers are going to make when they see Bridge Commander is with Interplay's previous titles. So how different will it really be? "Starfleet Academy had a minimal bridge but not an interactive crew, and Klingon Academy had a limited interactive crew without a bridge," begins Holland. "When we began designing the game, from the start we knew crew interaction was one of the most exciting and interesting parts of the Star Trek show and movies. We wanted to give fans the

feeling of what it is like to command a crew - with its quirky personalities and individual opinions - on a large capital ship. But to also still give the player the ability to jump in and control the action directly if desired, through the use of our thirdperson tactical mode.

"The game is completely 3D and has an entirely new graphics engine and new code base from the ground up. But it's definitely paid off in creating a much higher polygon count, and will allow for some spectacular visual effects including realtime geometry deformation." This new 3D engine promises to deliver higher framerates and more detail than the one used in Klingon Academy, as well as hopefully being more stable.

Activision has also tried to recreate the look of the combat scenes from the TV shows and films in greater detail. "The ship behaviours and armaments are patterned after the television show and movies and draw upon source material like Michael Okuda's technical manuals," Holland explains. "Each ship is given its own statistics, which govern things like firing arcs, power distribution, shield strengths, and special systems, to name a few. The battles will be more like a 10-round boxing match rather than the quick shootout of my previous space combat games."

Greasy issues

Strange as this might seem, there is a great deal of resistance to the concepts of violence, brutality and anything of a swashbuckling nature in the Star Trek fan world. American Trekkies routinely canned the Deep Space 9 series for having too many exciting episodes. Apparently their arteries are so clogged with bacon grease and undigested cocaine that any excitement at all can send their Demtel pacemakers into overload.

US fans seem to prefer the kind of episodes in which the characters have to deal with 'issues'. You know the drill: Data remembers he was molested by a randy ice machine at a

service station when he was three; Geordi turns his VISOR into a set of X-ray specs and unintentionally discovers Dr. Crusher is a transvestite. So how has the developer dealt with this entrenched negative attitude to combat in the Trek universe? According to Holland, the story was designed to allow the game to have several types of missions ranging across investigation, scientific and diplomacy. There will definitely be combat along the way, but always with the point of moving the plot along and being in context of the situation and your overall goals.

Details of Bridge Commander's online support are still sketchy, and as of now even the developer doesn't know what form it will ultimately take. It would be nice to have a cooperative multiplayer bridge environment where different players could take on different roles, but that's just wishful thinking for now. What is certain is that Activision is trying to incorporate all the things that fans liked about Klingon Academy and then take the concept up to another level. If they succeed we should be in for a treat.



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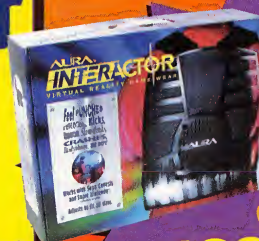
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STATE OF PLAY

ADVENTURE

The oldest game genre has been in danger of dying the death of a thousand point-and-clicks. **John Dewhurst** sees whether the future looks any brighter for the adventure game.

While other genres have found their niche in this high-speed, visually stunning (often 3D) era of gaming, adventure games are still trying desperately to get into a groove. Taking a look at the last PCPP Game of the Year results, we can see that of the three titles mentioned, only one attained Gold status, the great *Grim Fandango*. These fairly traditional, tried-and-true examples of adventure gaming are evidence of the old formula beginning to fail. In the shifting sands of the gaming world, is the adventure game dead?

From a gaming standpoint, no, it isn't dead. But where gamers find their adventuring has changed. Action games in particular have absorbed the story-based gameplay, almost to the point where the singleplayer campaigns of an action game are often as much adventure as action games. RPGs now seem to

DEFINE ADVENTURE

An adventure game traditionally has an emphasis on characters and a story of some kind, environmental interaction and puzzle-solving. This is at the expense of action or combat sequences. With origins in text-only adventures, like *Zork* and *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, the style of play is more analytical than dexterous.

offer much of what adventure games used to - the puzzle solving and conversation - to the point where the best adventure game in recent memory is actually an RPG (*Planescape: Torment*, of course). So part of the problem is that adventure territory has been invaded by other genres. While the features of adventure gaming are present throughout the modern game library,



Grim Fandango:
probably the last great
adventure game

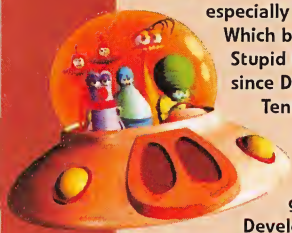
"adventures" themselves are scarce. These games need to become more appealing and varied in style to hold the interest of the modern gamer.

One of the adventure games leading the charge into this brave new territory is *In Cold Blood*. Revolution Software has taken the concept of the interactive movie minus the less than inspiring FMV. With the story as the focus, they have

looked to cinematic techniques to impress the gaming audience. In *Cold Blood* is also an attempt at mixing up the puzzle solving aspects with a tenser, more active approach to gameplay. With heavy artillery never at your disposal, you'll need to be on your toes to avoid detection, in an almost *Thief*-like fashion. Espionage is the order of day. We'll have a review next issue. ▶

STUPID INVADERS

Humour is something synonymous with adventure games, especially stupid humour. Which brings us to *Stupid Invaders*. Not since *Day of the Tentacle* have we seen such a relentless pursuit of goofy humour. Developed by Xilum (hereafter, son of Lucasarts), you control a motley crew of stupid aliens seeking freedom from the clutches of the evil Dr Sakarine. This is surely point-and-click heaven with a healthy dose of Ren & Stimpy style stupidity.



Point-and-click like a cow

The sequel and movie tie-in department of adventure gaming has always been well populated. Sure enough it makes good economic sense, but the trail of embarrassing carnage along the way shows that it doesn't always make for good gameplay. A number of adventure titles on the horizon fall into this category.

Lucasarts for many years was famous for its adventure games, so much so that their point-and-click interface has become a cliché of the genre itself. While we haven't seen much of this style of adventure for many years, there is one recently arrived title to keep the die-hards happy. The fourth title in the adventures of Guybrush Threepwood is *Escape from Monkey Island*. Following in the footsteps of *Grim Fandango*, this latest adventure is in 3D. Yet this is virtually the only change evident in the latest chapter. Throughout its history, *Monkey Island* has made a conspicuous effort to remain the same - same interface, same characters, hell the same gags even (insult swordfighting is an obvious favourite). Nevertheless, it should be a surefire hit, since it is one of the few hilarious games series ever.

The *Alone In the Dark* series pioneered a new style of play, using the pre-rendered backgrounds and dramatic camera angles that are stock in trade for many games these days. The fourth in the series, *Alone in the Dark: The New Nightmare* is a return to the spooky Lovecraft-style of the original, featuring incredibly detailed

pre-rendered backgrounds, beautifully painted for a high visual appeal. The game promises to be a hair-raising experience rather than a graphically bloody one (for a change), with atmospheric music and lighting (well, not that much) setting the tone. A typical sequence might involve your character searching a dark area with a flashlight and you just know your gonna find something nasty... The expectation of fear can be very powerful! We can expect *Alone in the Dark: The New Nightmare* early 2001.

We've Myst you

A true originator in adventure gaming, *Myst* sold a truckload many years ago. The basis in beautiful artwork and atmosphere was at the extreme end of the puzzle-as-everything adventure concept. Now we have two further sequels. The first is *Myst 3: Exile*, a continuation of the story after *Riven*. The trailer is nothing short of stunning but we'll have to wait and see what *Myst 3* offers, since on paper it seems to be more of the same. *Myst 3D* is one of the working titles of the other new title in the franchise. A new title but old material, since this is a recasting of the original game into three dimensions and realtime - as far as the weather and time of day goes. If you can forget all the puzzle solutions, it may be worth a look.

The problem is not so much that the rest of gaming has changed, it's that adventure gaming hasn't. Games where the core of your "adventuring" is

spent clicking on everything in sight, or combining items to no logical end are a thing of the past. Adventure games need to draw from new inspiration to broaden their scope, as their gaming cousins have done. This doesn't mean compromising the core of their aim: to provide that peculiar joy of the quest, but to make the experience more engaging.

The adventure market is wide open and the next developer to deliver something extraordinary will have champions in every adventure starved gamer out there. Much like the worried cries over the death of the RPG some years ago, you never know when a style of game will come back into fashion. Since adventure gaming still arouses interest, it's only a matter of time before someone cottons onto the possibilities. Viva adventuring!

Elaine's delight upon meeting the monkey is clear to all



Will *Myst III* surprise us and actually be an entertaining game?

BLAIR WITCH PROJECTS

This first *Blair Witch* adventure from *Terminal Reality* (three volumes in all will be made by three different developers) is licensed from the successful feature film and takes up one of the historical incidents that precede the events involving three unlucky campers. The game uses the *Nocturne* engine and has a decidedly *Resident Evil* feel. But with defined objectives and over 1700 lines of dialogue, it will aim for the atmosphere of a good adventure. Most of the dialogue shouldn't be endless streams of expletives either.



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COUNTER-STRIKE

FOR THOSE NOT ALREADY CAUGHT IN
THE CORDITE-SHROUDED GRIP OF
COUNTER-STRIKE FEVER,
BRETT ROBINSON DISCUSSES THE
ORIGINS AND INTRICACIES OF THIS
EXTREMELY SUCCESSFUL HALF LIFE MOD.

After its acclaimed debut at the Half-Life Mod Expo '99, Counter-Strike's Project Leader, Minh Le, was approached by Valve Software representatives and offered financial assistance in developing the groundbreaking mod. Valve also placed the technical expertise of its Half-Life programming team at the disposal of Le and his compatriots.

In the 16 months since the release of the first Counter-Strike beta, the game has metamorphosed from a decidedly amateurish mod into the major component of a retail release. Indeed, Counter-Strike is now by far

the most popular multiplayer firstperson shooter played online, besting the combined player bases of Quake 3: Arena and Unreal Tournament by a significant margin.

THE QUICK KILL

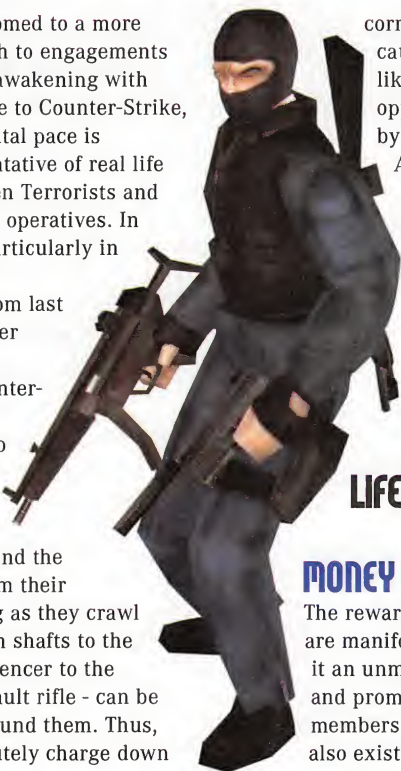
Although innately similar to the ever-popular Rogue Spear, Counter-Strike focuses less on strategic planning, and is generally a faster-paced game. Because of the time limit imposed on matches, much of the action takes place within the first 30 - 60 seconds. Rarely do more than a handful of players survive the initial hostilities.

This is not a problem, however, as combatants killed in action are accorded 'observer' status and are free to watch the remainder of the battle from any position. Interestingly, this in itself is quite enjoyable, as the unique perspective afforded by 'observer' mode allows players to witness the tension-filled ballet of violence and desperation unfold before them. Die-hard players will watch the progress of their surviving squad mates and silently urge them onward, while those less concerned with victory will appreciate the skill, stupidity and blind luck of comrades and enemies alike.



Gamers accustomed to a more measured approach to engagements will suffer a rude awakening with their first exposure to Counter-Strike, but the game's brutal pace is chillingly representative of real life encounters between Terrorists and Counter Terrorism operatives. In such situations, particularly in the case of sieges, engagements seldom last longer than a matter of seconds.

Because of Counter-Strike's accurate simulation of audio dynamics, stealth is an essential ingredient for success. Every sound the player makes - from their laboured breathing as they crawl through ventilation shafts to the attachment of a silencer to the barrel of their assault rifle - can be heard by those around them. Thus, players who resolutely charge down



corridors, heedless of the racket caused by their rapid motion, are likely to be swiftly slain by opponents alerted to their approach by the echo of footsteps on linoleum.

A more sedate pace virtually ensures that the player will live longer, both because adversaries won't be aware of their presence in advance, and because movement speed also affects the accuracy of the player's aim.

THE BRUTAL PACE IS CHILLINGLY REPRESENTATIVE OF REAL LIFE ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN TERRORISTS AND COUNTER OPERATIVES

MONEY FOR JAM

The rewards of success in Counter-Strike are manifold. Obviously, victory brings with it an unmistakable sense of achievement and promotes camaraderie between squad members, but a far more potent incentive also exists: money. As with any commodity,

items of superior quality are generally more expensive than those of lesser quality. Such is the case in Counter-Strike, where the better weapons and items cost more than those which are decidedly average.

Winning a match credits each squad member with a certain amount of money. This allows them to purchase better weapons and equipment which, in turn, increases their chances of success in the next round. Fortunately for less skilled squads, the losing side is also credited with a certain (though smaller) amount of money at the conclusion

PCPP'S FINEST

David: Being the master of Quake 3's Railgun, I have an affinity for the Arctic Warfare Magnum. It's the most powerful sniper rifle in the game, which allows me to take out any distant adversary with a single shot. Unfortunately, my squad mates seldom provide adequate cover fire when the enemies get too close, leaving me (for want of a better term) a sitting duck!

Brett: The Steyr AUG is my weapon of choice: Its potent combination of accuracy, power and a 1.4x scope makes it ideal for engaging opponents up close, at a distance and anywhere in between. My average kill/death ratio of 8/1 speaks for itself, though the term 'surgical precision' does spring to mind.

Hugh: Personally, I love the elephant-stopping power of the M249 PARA Light Machine Gun. With such a phenomenal rate of fire, it's definitely a 'spray-and-pray' weapon. 'Accuracy by volume' is my motto.



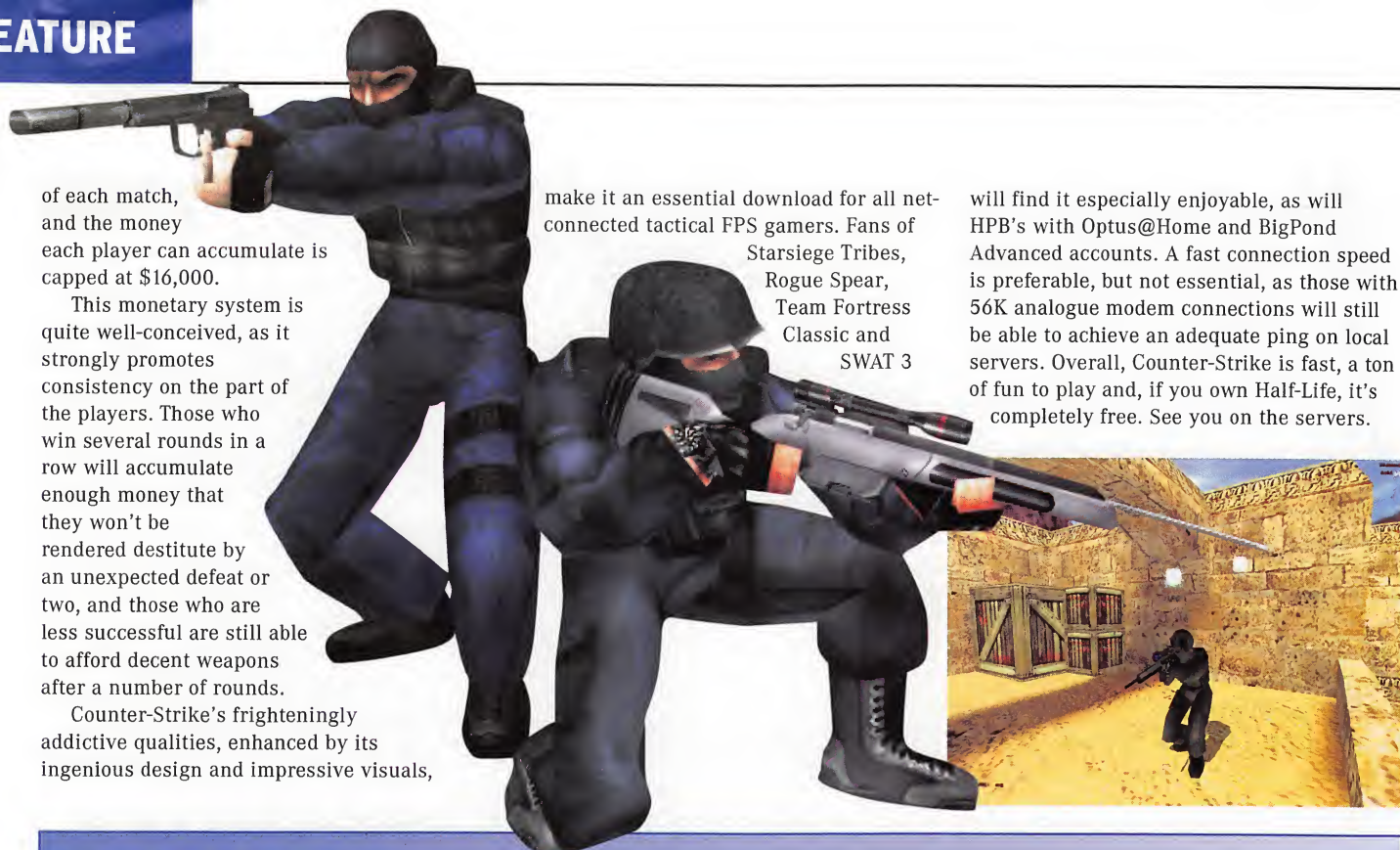
of each match, and the money each player can accumulate is capped at \$16,000.

This monetary system is quite well-conceived, as it strongly promotes consistency on the part of the players. Those who win several rounds in a row will accumulate enough money that they won't be rendered destitute by an unexpected defeat or two, and those who are less successful are still able to afford decent weapons after a number of rounds.

Counter-Strike's frighteningly addictive qualities, enhanced by its ingenious design and impressive visuals,

make it an essential download for all net-connected tactical FPS gamers. Fans of Starsiege Tribes, Rogue Spear, Team Fortress Classic and SWAT 3

will find it especially enjoyable, as will HPB's with Optus@Home and BigPond Advanced accounts. A fast connection speed is preferable, but not essential, as those with 56K analogue modem connections will still be able to achieve an adequate ping on local servers. Overall, Counter-Strike is fast, a ton of fun to play and, if you own Half-Life, it's completely free. See you on the servers.



COUNTER-STRIKE WEB RESOURCES

SUCH A SUCCESSFUL ONLINE GAME NATURALLY BOASTS AN ARRAY OF SITES DEVOTED TO SINGING ITS PRAISES

WWW.COUNTER-STRIKE.NET

The Official Counter-Strike site. The latest beta version of Counter-Strike (7.1) and update patches can be downloaded from here, but to save you some time we've included v7.1 on this issue's cover CD. The final version of Counter-Strike (v1.0) will be available for download, free of charge, within a matter of weeks.

WWW.ROGERWILCO.COM

For anyone not wise to the ways of the world, Roger Wilco is a freeware program that acts like a virtual walkie-talkie between gamers playing online. Because it eliminates the need to type messages in the thick of battle, Roger Wilco makes communicating with Counter-Strike squad mates a lot simpler and much less risky. All you need is a microphone, but a proper headset is preferable. Decent headsets only cost around \$30, so they're well within the grasp of the average online gaming junkie. Roger Wilco can operate in either 'voice-activated' or 'push-to-talk' modes and weighs in at microscopic 360Kb download.

HTTP://CSNATION.COUNTER-STRIKE.NET

The most comprehensive Counter-Strike site on the net. CSNation's main page is updated several times per day with news and information relevant to the Counter-Strike community. It also features an amusing Screenshot of the Day, and a humour section chronicling the adventures of Arctic Joe: the Armani parka-wearing terrorist. For Counter-Strike newbies, the CS Guide provides basic

information on the rules of the various game modes, and some useful tips that will make staying alive for more than five seconds markedly easier. For those with a good grasp of the basics, the Basic Strategies guide covers the best weapons to use in specific situations, and offers some excellent advice on coordinating attacks with fellow team mates. The Advanced Strategies guide covers specific weapons and equipment, outlines a number of ways to improve communication between squad members, and lists several methods of grenade deployment.

The purpose of The Sniper's Nest section is rather self-explanatory. The Sniper's Handbook found within is an invaluable resource for those with a penchant for 'one-shot-one-kill' attacks from afar. It covers every aspect of sniping - from concealment to target selection - in exacting detail. It also includes a special section on counter-sniping: the art of hunting down a rival sniper.

A special section devoted to bots reviews several of the better ones and makes them available for download. Bots are especially useful for players who don't have the luxury of a cable net connection, or simply want to get in some practice between matches. Be sure to check out the impressive RealBot, known for its ability to defeat seasoned Counter-Strike veterans!

In addition to the version 7.1 Counter-Strike beta, you can find an excellent training level (cs_academy_beta) courtesy of CSNation on this month's cover CD.

HTTP://SKINS.COUNTER-STRIKE.NET/

The site to go to for hundreds of character, weapon and equipment skins. The higher quality skins can really make a player stand out from the crowd. Whether or not this is, in fact, a good thing depends on your level of proficiency.

WWW.COUNTERSTRIKE.ORG

A very professional looking network of Counter-Strike related sites. Many of the featured sites are of questionable quality, in spite of their impressive facades. But if you can tolerate the excessive use of 1337 5p34[{} and the obligatory immature undertones, a few of the sites listed feature some impressive fan art galleries and quirky humour pieces.

HTTP://CS-SCRIPTING.20ML.COM/NEWBIES.HTML

While repeatedly purchasing weapons, ammunition and equipment at the start of each round is all well and good if you don't mind being left behind by your more experienced squad mates, Counter-Strike pros use aliases bound to specific keys to buy everything they need with a single keystroke. Creating complicated aliases is a daunting and time-consuming process, but that's when this site comes in handy. SxRxRnR's (verbal pronunciation not recommended) CS Scripting site includes a scripting tutorial, a guide to debugging scripts and a slew of downloadable, pre-programmed scripts.

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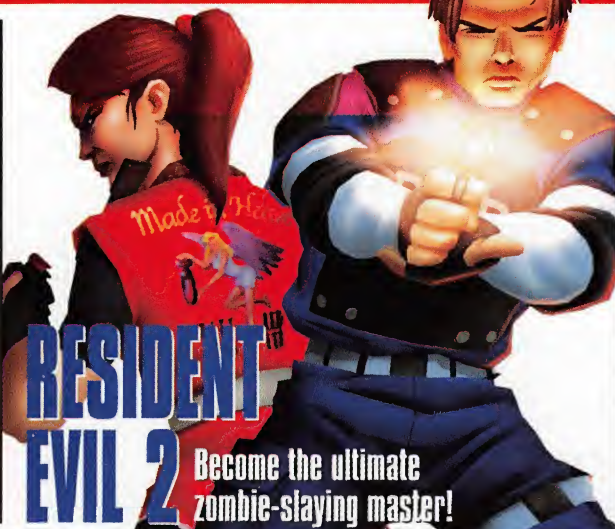


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A man with short dark hair, glasses, and a goatee is talking on a black mobile phone. He is wearing a blue button-down shirt under a dark jacket. The background is a blurred city street with other people and buildings.

Dominic Rossi

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Advertising Content Producer

HOBBIES:

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IN REVIEW

The most authoritative reviews around

INDEX



Wizenized old gamers who still maintain that gaming's golden age passed us by two decades ago should re-evaluate their position on the matter. With five games in this month's issue receiving scores of 90% and above, and countless AAA titles on the way, there could hardly be more convincing proof that the industry is still going strong.

Anyone with even a passing interest in multiplayer firstperson shooters should mentally deduct \$49.95 from their bank account right now: Counter-Strike is, without doubt, one of the best games of its kind. Having only started playing it within the past month, I now wonder how I managed to survive without it.

As for the rest of this month's top titles, to extol the virtues of each in detail would be far beyond the scope of this intro. So, without further ado, I direct you to the subsequent pages and wish you the best of luck in deciding which games to buy. Should you find yourself unable to resist the siren songs of these gems, I also wish you luck in convincing the bank manager to fork over a loan. Believe me, you will need it!

brettr@next.com.au



- 72 Escape from Monkey Island
- 76 Sacrifice
- 80 Crimson Skies
- 84 Dirt Track Racing
- 86 Star Trek Voyager: Elite Force
- 88 Half-Life: Counter-Strike
- 90 Homeworld: Cataclysm
- 92 MTV Skateboarding
- 93 V-Rally 2
- 94 Rugby 2001
- 96 Scorelist
- 98 Retroversion: Diablo II



THE PCPP REVIEW SYSTEM

SCORING

- 90+** Gold Award. A classic, everyone will love this game.
- 89-80** A strong title that's hard to fault. But perhaps not the best in its field.
- 79-60** Competent and playable. For fans of the genre.
- 59-40** Decidedly average, probably boring.
- 39-0** A dog. Bad, shamelessly unoriginal, cheap and horrible. Avoid.

Need The minimum requirements to get the game running at a playable speed.

Want The ideal system requirements for the game.

For The major reasons why you'll like the reviewed game.

Against The major reasons why you won't.

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ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND



We love monkeys, so of course we love the island as well

DETAILS

GENRE

3D Comedy
Adventure

MULTIPLAYER

No way, Jose!

DEVELOPER

Lucasarts

PUBLISHER

Lucasarts

DISTRIBUTOR

Electronic Arts

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

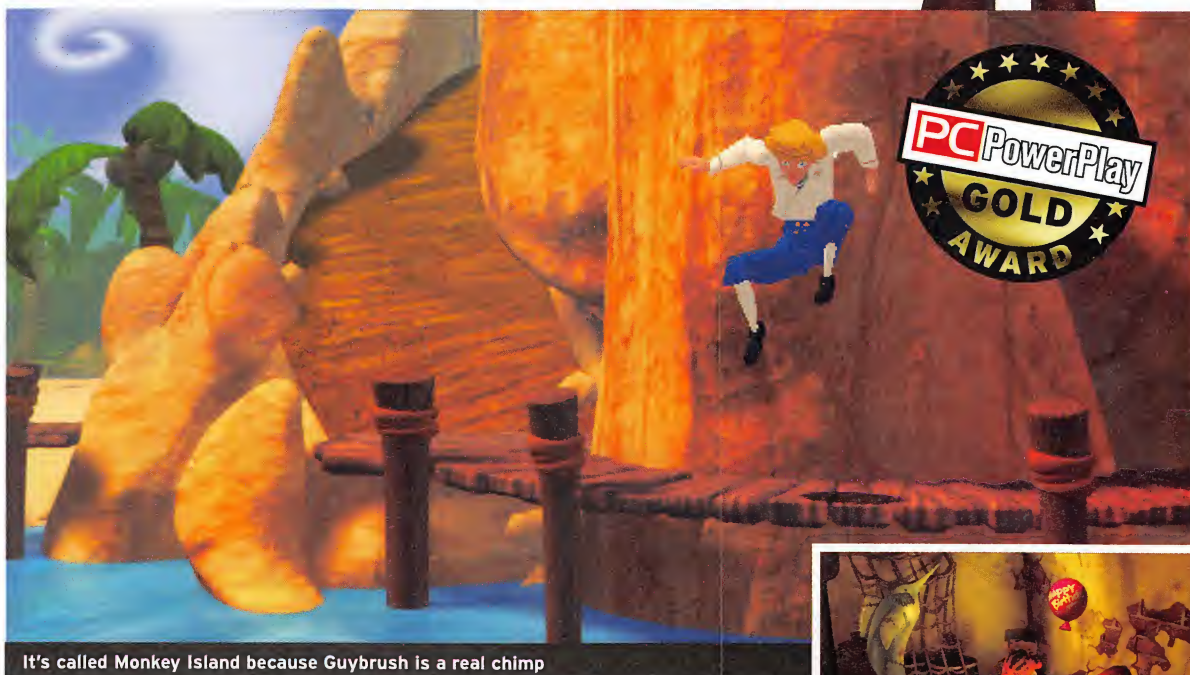
G

NEED

P-200, 32Mb RAM,
4Mb 3D Videocard
(D3D)

WANT

PII-400, 64Mb RAM



It's called Monkey Island because Guybrush is a real chimp

Let me set the scene for *Escape from Monkey Island*. The popular graphic adventures that LucasArts produced during the '90s had all but dried up by the end of the decade. For many reasons, adventure games were slowly squeezed out of the market by fast-paced action games, strategy and online games. The creative staff who helped to produce these adventures slowly left the company and, for one reason or another, LucasArts lost interest in producing such games. Indeed, many thought *Grim Fandango* would be the last of the species. But as we've seen in the last few years, the ghosts of gaming past are returning anew. Just read *State of Play* elsewhere in this issue (p63) to catch the rest of this ongoing saga.

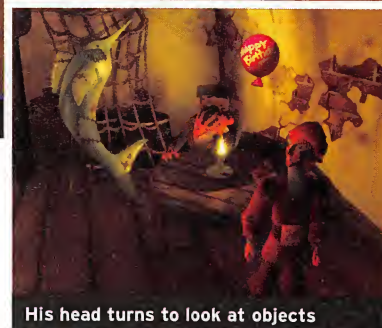
Back to *Monkey Island*. Adventure games tend to gather sequels - just look at Sierra's endless *Quest* games. The *Secret of Monkey Island* is more than ten years old now, but upon release was a breath of fresh air in the deathly serious landscape of RPGs and adventures. The story of a pirate, his girlfriend and a rival pirate is a ripe target in the gaming world, even today. Its two sequels followed in much the same format, duly updated.

While a fresh title is always a preference, if we were going to see another LucasArts adventure, then we all knew *Monkey Island 4* would be it. So, what does *Escape from Monkey Island* herald? A sigh of disgust? A sigh of relief? The end of an era? The era of a series? Let's find out...

Curious comedy

Making another *Monkey Island* is obviously an economic decision for LucasArts, since rehashing - I mean, *building* on a strong name is an almost certain way to make a profit. In light of this, it's understandable that very little has changed in the Tri-Island area. From the scripted sections to the dialogue to the gags to the stupid but strangely logical puzzles, this is the *Monkey Island* that we know and love. The more stylised and overtly cheesy attitude of *Curse of Monkey Island* is continued here in glorious 3D.

The stars of the adventure are Guybrush Threepwood, the antithesis of what it is to be a pirate; Elaine Marley, his damsel-in-distress turned domineering wife; and, of course, the ghost pirate LeChuck, looking suspiciously human. And, since each subsequent *Monkey Island* has become a high school reunion of sorts, the likes of Wally, Voodoo Lady, Murray



His head turns to look at objects



An exclusive shot of Tribes 3!

(a demonic skull laugh riot) et al are in for yet another return appearance, which is a good thing. We even see the return of a number of characters from the very first *Monkey Island*. While the obsessive fans will no doubt love this, the rest of us may well be left trying to remember these half-familiar faces from ten years ago. I know I was.

In this adventure through the mythical Caribbean islands, Guybrush and significant other Elaine have just returned

ONLINE

www.lucasarts.com/products/monkey4



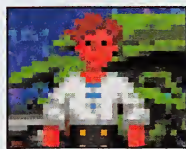
www.thescumbar.com



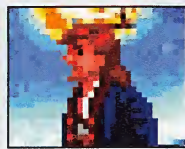
THE 10,000 FACES OF GUYBRUSH THREEWOOD

Guybrush, the (wannabe) hero of Monkey Island has been through a lot in four games. He seems to have gotten younger even - he looks more and more pubescent in each successive game.

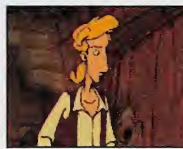
Secret of Monkey Island - 1990



Monkey Island 2 1992



The Curse of Monkey Island - 1997



Escape from Monkey Island - 2000



A pink galleon! Ah, those wacky, zany, madcap LucasArts guys...



Did Guybrush and Elaine have a shotgun wedding?



Hey, haven't I captioned you before?

where you make a giant slingshot out of a cactus and a rubber tyre, for example

from their honeymoon (complete with suggestive comments) to find that Elaine, the Governor of Melee Island, has been declared dead. Could the enigmatic Charles L. Charles have anything to do with this? He is trying desperately to be elected the new leader of Melee Island. In the mean time, an Australian property developer, Ozzie Mandrill, is buying out all of the island property within coo-ee, but to what end? It just gets curiously and curiously. The story is merely a loose frame on which to hang quests and, above all, comedy of many varieties.

Sidesplitting

The puzzle solving requirements of a Monkey Island game are notoriously varied and obscure. I think back to creating voodoo dolls, contesting a spitting competition, using a monkey as a wrench and trying repeatedly to be buried alive. This is one of the joys of this style of comedy adventure - no matter how stupid the idea, it just might work. Fortunately, nothing is different in this sequel, where you make a giant slingshot out of a cactus and a rubber tyre, for example. For those who are concerned, you are able to combine items as in previous

Monkey Islands, even though you couldn't in Grim Fandango.

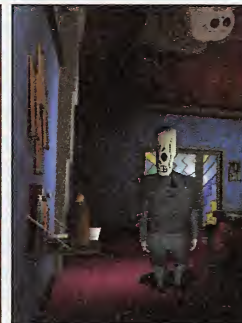
The success of a game like this is in its attention to humour. We're in heavy parody land and pretty much everything has to make you laugh - whether it's dialogue, visual gags or puzzles and their solutions. Those who cynically equate adventure games with too much talking should know to stay away, since there's dialogue aplenty. Escape from Monkey Island uses the now traditional select a question/answer variety of conversation. Some very funny, very stupid conversations take place and



Oh, please, save our sides!

THINGS TO DO ON MELEE ISLAND WHEN YOU'RE DEAD

Escape from Monkey Island uses the same engine as Grim Fandango. The mechanics of the two games are thus identical, where Guybrush is moved around the game with the keyboard arrow keys. Instead of the point-n-click system, Guybrush "looks" at objects or characters that he can interact with. The controls offer a small number of actions: look, use, etc. The intention is to instil in the game a more involving experience than the standard mouse-controlled adventure, making the player identify more closely with the hero. The simple controls keep the game easily accessible.





One for the Austen readers out there



His pants are even coloured deep blue



Don't worry, it's not a jumping puzzle



Can't we just escape on the ship?



Ooh, crazy architecture!



This map brings back a flood of nostalgic memories

PCPP

FOR

- Fun atmosphere
- Stupidity and hilarity all in a pirate gumbo
- Monkeys!

AGAINST

- Another sequel?
- Did you ever see Police Academy 4?

OVERALL

This is a classic adventure in new 3D clothing

90%

this is where a good deal of the humour is generated. There are some A-grade laughs on offer, but those with a more serious disposition might find it annoying trying to get some actual information out of the non-stop comedy routines.

All of the dialogue is presented as speech and the voice acting is particularly good this time around. Guybrush is credible if not-too-piratey, while Elaine is an obvious know-it-all - in fact, she sounds suspiciously like Grace from Gabriel Knight 3 (Hmm...). Though the real stars are the cameos who get most of the good lines and the chance to ham it up terribly. A good example is the catapult operator, complete with Noo Yawk accent and council worker attitude. Considering how difficult it is to do humour in a PC game, this is the stuff of dreams.

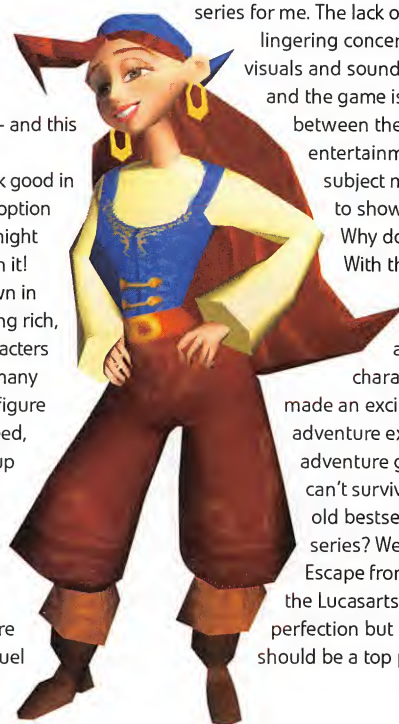
Cartoon creation

The visual shift to 3D hasn't hurt the experience at all. *Escape from Monkey Island* uses an improved *Grim Fandango* engine. The backgrounds are all prerendered and look beautifully stylistic - quite an achievement in 3D. It's certainly cartoony - the visuals complementing the story - and this is one of only a handful of adventure games that look good in 3D; that the game has no option for software mode in 3D might have something to do with it! The backgrounds are drawn in 32-bit colour depth, creating rich, beautiful scenes. The characters are 3D as well and boast many times more polygons per figure than *Grim Fandango*. Indeed, visually the game stands up very, very well.

Well, it's a big sigh of relief for Guybrush fans, as *Escape from Monkey Island* is a great achievement for adventure gaming. It's the third sequel and by all rights should

be coming out bundled with the other three at an unbelievably low price. But this is as good an adventure as *Curse of Monkey Island* if not quite on par with *LeChuck's Revenge*, the highpoint of the series for me. The lack of originality is a lingering concern. While the visuals and sound are really special and the game is well balanced between the challenge and entertainment factors, the subject matter is beginning to show some seams. Why do another sequel? With this excellent framework, a new situation and set of characters would have made an exciting new adventure experience. The adventure game industry can't survive on facsimiles of old bestsellers. The end of a series? We can only hope. *Escape from Monkey Island* is the Lucasarts recipe done to perfection but a new menu should be a top priority.

John Dewhurst



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SACRIFICE



Critics' favourite Shiny strikes gameplay gold once again

DETAILS

GENRE

Action Strategy
Roleplaying

MULTIPLAYER

Yes

DEVELOPER

Shiny
Entertainment

PUBLISHER

Interplay

DISTRIBUTOR

Interplay

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

TBA

NEED

PII-300, 64Mb RAM,
500Mb HDD, 3D
Videocard (D3D)

WANT

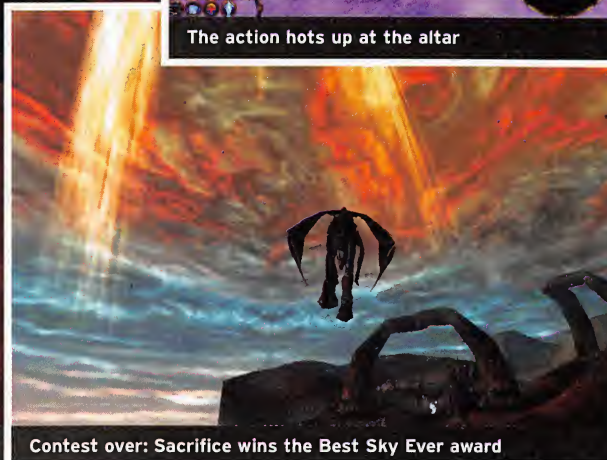
PIII-500, 128Mb RAM



Enemy design is best described as "imaginative"



The action hots up at the altar



Contest over: Sacrifice wins the Best Sky Ever award

In *Sacrifice* you play a great and powerful wizard who has escaped the destruction of his homeland at the hands of the gods by stepping into a strange and new dimension - one where five of these misshapen gods happen to reside. Given the magical potential of your character, these squabbling gods vie

for your services offering to further your standing in the arcane arts with access to more powerful spells and magical abilities. Siding with one of the gods - either Persephone, Pyros, Charnel, James the Glebe and Stratos (each representing the different elements of nature, as well as a facet of human nature) - you

Sacrifice is the most ambitious experiment to date. It combines all the markings of The Shiny Game - incongruous creature design, strange and fantastic world settings, rich and weird character that permeates throughout, and the most important Shiny ingredient - a passion for pushing the envelope. Shiny itself calls it an "action, realtime strategy, roleplaying game", highlighting the mix of a number of established genre maxims into one.

Is it possible? Are they mad? And so the all-important question presents itself (with a healthy dose of scepticism): does it actually bloody work? Yes it does. Brilliantly, actually. *Sacrifice* is a beautiful gaming experience from the very moment the load screen vanishes and you're dumped into the land of gods, wizards, and horribly disfigured but immensely functional creatures.

When it was first demonstrated at E3 earlier this year, the game repeatedly scored "most beautiful" and "exciting" game of the show awards. Putting this into some perspective, many walked away from the stand repeating phrases along the lines of "I've got no idea what the games all about, but - damn! - does it look incredible!" Shiny made a very superficial, but very powerful, impression on the gaming community at large at the time.

the visual splendour of peering over the edge
and gazing into great ethereal voids



One of the more unusual wizards for you to play

embark on upholding the virtue of your chosen god in the most noble possible way. Through fierce and bloody combat and the use of a spectacular array of spells, of course.

The folks at Shiny Entertainment are masters of distortion. And let it be said that none of 'em suffer from the frustration that comes with *not* letting their imagination run wild. Shiny's collective consciousness inspires some truly innovative, exciting and even artistically challenging excursions down the game fantastic - and *Sacrifice* will go down as being the epitome of them all.



Summon a horde of bizarre creatures to do the dirty work

Indeed, the world portrayed in Sacrifice is incredibly alluring. Reminiscent of Planet Moon Studios' (which, not surprisingly, consists of ex-Shiny members) up-coming action/strategy game Giants, Shiny has created environments you'd rather curl up with a good book or take a picnic in (all tastes are catered for - volcanic, crater-pocked wastelands are also present for the more drastic creatures out there). Hills, valleys, trees, giant rocks - they're all here in natural form, albeit with a psychedelic bent to them. More breathtaking is the visual splendour of peering over the edge of these islands and gazing into great ethereal voids.

However, the static lure of the Sacrifice world is nothing when compared to viewing it in action. It's colourful, it's vibrant, it's utterly intoxicating. The use of spells, ritual and even some creatures' natural combat abilities creates a pyrotechnic display that absolutely poops all over the one seen over Sydney Harbour during the closing ceremony of the 2000 Olympic games. And the game engine handles it all beautifully.

RTSRPG action

Sacrifice is an action game, first and foremost. The game does borrow heavily from the RTS genre; you are responsible for creating and commanding units into bloody battle, as well



Damn, what was that spell again?

as securing the resources you need to do so. However your presence on the 3D battlefield is not an omnipotent one - the perspective is restricted to an over-the-shoulder, thirdperson view behind just your wizard. You can't jump from character to character nor is the perspective significantly controllable. This means that you pretty much see only what your character sees - and considering that you're in a world filled with hills and valleys, this also highlights the important line of sight element of the game. The effects of this important decision by Shiny are soon obvious. Firstly, you roleplay the one character and, secondly (and inclusively), the perspective better immerses you within the world.

There have been some concessions made to combat to balance the focus on one playable character. A mini-map features prominently



The maps are simply huge



Zyzyx the owl guides you through the basics

and players can command their units from here. However, given the 3D nature of the world, it is referred to primarily for orientation. Also, players can zoom out the view from behind the shoulder of the wizard to a higher vantage point. When over the shoulder, players see more distance; when zoomed back, players see more of the immediate surrounds of the wizard - which is essential for battle.

As for the nuts and bolts of Sacrifice, ahh... Shiny are gods! As a wizard, you have access to three types of spells, and be prepared to use them a heck of a lot throughout each mission. The first type includes general offensive and defensive spells to give that extra edge in combat. The second accounts for creature summoning spells, forming the fodder of your attacking force. The third encompasses all structure building spells, as well as a number of specific, miscellaneous spells.

The fuel for these spells is mana. The altar to your god of choice (which also serves as home base) recharges the wizard's mana stores when he enters close proximity, however this pales in comparison to the rate of recharge of a mana fountain. These holes in the ground spewing forth bright blue magical energy can also be tapped by use of the Manalith spell, which creates wells to harvest the mana. Control of these points is essential - the recharge of mana near friendly Manaliths increases further, and they also

SOUL SEARCHING

Those souls need saving! Soul harvesting is easily done by casting the convert spell on enemy souls (the opaque stick figures scattered about the battlefield - especially after battle). However it's not over yet. The enemy soul is only given to you once it's been cleansed back at your wizards altar. Once yours, your gain becomes the others loss, which tips the balance of the war into your favour...



ONLINE

www.shiny.com
Developers' site



www.sacrifice.net
Official site



www.sacrificenews.com
An excellent and very enthusiastic fansite





Realtime strategy that lets you get right into the thick of the battle



Descending from the heavens



Eat laser death ray, foul beast!



Lying low for a while



Spells can create huge volcanoes, as well as earthquakes



A gathering in the war room

encouraged to strike sooner rather than later. Hectic, but in a decidedly fun manner.

Spiritual guidance

If it all sounds a tad too overwhelming and confusing, fear not. There's a comprehensive (and short) tutorial campaign where your familiar (a magical owl named Zyzyn) guides you through almost every aspect of the game. He also remains present in the campaign missions for further strategic advice. Shiny has also worked hard to ensure that the interface is as transparent as possible to streamline the wizard's control. They've succeeded admirably in diverting attention away from menus and screens and into efficient control of functions on screen.

Sacrifice is work of art. The visuals, the mission structure, the varied objectives, the scripted events, the intelligently written and highly amusing dialogue, the strong characterisation of the many inhabitants of the world, the cutscenes, the development of wizard into a powerful magic being, and the setting are all, well, "so beautifully conceived".

Shiny has created a fascinating and inviting new world for us to play in. Overlook it to your own peril.

March Stepnik

prevent enemy wizards from recharging their mana stores at that fountain.

All souled out

Not all battle rages around Manaliths, however, and without a steady supply of mana the wizard is essentially powerless. To solve this problem, each wizard has the summon Manahoar spell - a creature with no offensive capabilities that taps into mana stores in the atmosphere and channels them for immediate use (essentially, Manahoars are portable Manaliths). The more Manahoars you summon, the quicker your mana stores build, however the less your party has room for offensive units.

The other resource is souls. Souls are the currency used to summon units. They float above the bodies of fallen creatures. The blue ones represent the souls of dead units under your command; the red ones belong to your foes. To harvest a blue soul, your wizard must

simply touch it. The harvesting of a red soul, however, is a more challenging affair. To bring a red soul into your fold the wizard must cast the Convert spell; the catch being that it uses a significant amount of mana to cast, and that the ritual to convert the soul takes some time - time enough for your enemy wizard to rush back and collect his fallen comrade.

As for the wizard himself - your character is more or less invincible. Lose all hit points and you enter an ethereal state (you can still move your character and issue commands, however you can't collect souls or cast any offensive spells). To resurrect, half your mana store must be recharged - and the quickest way to do this is high-tail it back to a Manalith or the altar. The same goes for any opposing wizard. The other penalty to death is a loss of experience, which can slow your encounter with newer spells and abilities as you gain levels.

So how does a wizard suffer defeat? By having his altar desecrated by an enemy wizard. The end result is a mighty and tense battle fought on a number of fronts, tickling your tactical sensibilities. It's quick too; since the only way to build the size of your army is to harvest souls, ALL wizards are

PCPP

FOR

■ Engaging and visually stunning game world
■ Cut-throat action, with a strategic bent

AGAINST

■ Slightly finicky control in battle
■ Some of the battles can draw out to a huge length...

OVERALL

Fantasy action strategy, and Shiny at their best

90%

WHAT IS AUSTRALIA'S BEST MAGAZINE FOR
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HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE?

nextmusic

THE FUTURE OF MUSIC TECHNOLOGY



ISSUE NINE
ON SALE NOW
WITH FREE CD

available at all good newsagents

CRIMSON SKIES

Tally ho, old boy! Let's get this bucket of bolts off the ground!

DETAILS

GENRE

Action Flight Sim

MULTIPLAYER

Yes (1-8 via MS Gaming Zone)

DEVELOPER

Zipper Interactive

PUBLISHER

Microsoft

DISTRIBUTOR

Microsoft

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

TBA

NEED

PII-300, 32Mb RAM, 900Mb HDD, 3D Videocard (D3D)

WANT

PIII, 64Mb RAM



I think I can see the leak!

Dames, wisecracks and homburg hats! Zipper Interactive's *Crimson Skies* takes you back to the 1930s at a thousand miles an hour in an absolute gem of action, atmosphere and animation.

Fly into an alternative 1937, in which the USA has collapsed into isolated nation states, and the road and rail networks hold second place to the commerce of the skies. Merchant zeppelins and a wonderful variety of smaller aircraft plough the clouds, running the gauntlet of dashing and debonair villains, air militias, and the remnants of the US military. It's an exciting life on the wrong side of the law, with hidden treasure to be found, beautiful dolls to be rescued, and old scores to be settled. From skyline to skyline, *Crimson Skies* is glamour and derring-do whichever way you look. Zipper has a very corny story to tell, but it's told so well that you'll find yourself believing it from the moment the curtain raises on the introductory "Aerotone" newsreel.

Damsels in distress

The central character in *Crimson Skies* is Nathan Zachary, leader of a band of air pirates known as the Fortune Hunters. The aim is simple: progress through the 24 missions, get rich, get famous, and get the girl. Most of the action takes place at just a few hundred feet, and the modified MechWarrior 3 engine does a first rate job of getting up close and personal with the

scenery, action and special effects. Locations range from the caves and canyons of Hawaii, to the plains and cities of continental USA, all of which are intricately modelled - no single trees or blurred buildings amongst this lot. The missions match the broad sweep of the gameworld, requiring such diverse talents as treasure hunting, starlet rescuing and mid-air theft.

Crazy objectives call for crazy solutions, and the developer's imagination has run wild in the design department, with a dozen unique aircraft becoming available as the game progresses. Fighters, bombers and zeppelins are all there for the flying (or the shooting!), and each is a classic of art-deco design. The big names of the aviation industry are well represented, but yesterday's design teams never dreamed of these aircraft. Some defy the laws of physics, others might just have worked, but all of them look superb on a PC. You may be a hotshot in an F/A-18, but you're just not in the running until you've flown through a tunnel in a Hughes Firebrand!

As you've probably guessed, atmosphere drives the whole *Crimson Skies* experience. Flickering newsreels set the scene, supported by the sights and sounds of the 30s. Swing-time music, stereotypical American

One of the year's most innovative titles combines the best aspects of flight sims, arcade shooters and action adventures to produce a game that has something for everyone. This melding of ideas is certainly more than the sum of its parts, with no joins in sight. So crank up the wireless, put realism, credibility and logic to one side, and immerse yourself in the fantastic game world of *Crimson Skies*.





The terrain modelling is superb



The real truth behind the bombing of the Statue of Liberty in Deus Ex

characterisations, and first-rate artwork all contribute to the period feel, with just enough reality thrown in to make the whole thing believable. Perhaps the greatest artistic achievement is the mission cutscenes, which do such a good job of enhancing the feeling of continuity that players will actually look forward to them. The overall feel is that of an old style radio play, or the cliffhanger serials that packed cinemas 50 years ago (*Des, you're showing your age here - Ed*). Microsoft is obviously keen to push this aspect of the game, with the official website carrying on in a similar vein.

Seat of the pants

Crimson Skies is not a flight sim in the traditional sense, but even hardcore simmers are still in for a real treat. As the



Briefing screens maintain the 30s feel

important than the nuances of flight models, and maintaining a rakish grin whilst flying upside down in the dark beats a detailed knowledge of aerial tactics. Impressions are far more important than detail in a game like this, and Zipper has managed to capture the sensation of flight while making the game



Bird, Hollywood, Bird - as Public Enemy might have sung

DO IT FOR THE GLORY!

In a nice touch, as well as completing missions, you can earn points by undertaking traditional daredevil type stuff. Storm that barn, loop that loop, don't lose your hat, and then read all about how great you are in the paper.



and keep you up to date with the action, while the artwork and scenery are just superb. The net result is that it's virtually impossible to get lost or lose track of the mission, despite the need to fight your way to most targets. In many ways, Crimson Skies outdoes some contemporary flight sims in its attention to detail, while still managing to keep it simple. Tricky bits - like jumping on to the wing of an enemy bomber and throwing the pilot over the side! - are handled by cutscenes that kick in once players position the aircraft correctly.

Seamless script

That said, don't be fooled into thinking this game is a walkover. Combat is intense, and things fly at a fair old pace. Close to the ground means close to crashing, and barnstorming skills become more important as the game progresses. Enemy attacks are admittedly of the wave variety, but the interesting nature of the mission objectives adds a layer of complexity to Crimson Skies that isn't necessarily evident in the early missions. Picture Luke Skywalker taking out the Death Star in a biplane and you're on the right track! Weapon effects are good, although the damage modelling is fairly basic, and the excessive number of hostiles is compensated for by the fact that they're not too bright.

ONLINE

The official Crimson Skies site builds on the gameworld, with histories, blos, and new chapters in the story of the Sky Pirates. The other two links take you to the recent Grand Prize-winning fan sites, both of which are packed with interviews, screens and opinions.

www.microsoft.com/games/crimsonskies



www.redskulllegion.com



www.furballmag.com/cs



guns and rockets can be retrofitted to that experimental aircraft you stole last week

emphasis is squarely on high-flying action, players will find the controls intuitive and quick to master via joystick, with almost no need for the keyboard. Newcomers will be looping loops and storming barns before they know it, as flying quickly becomes second nature. Which is just as well, because seat-of-the-pants reactions are more

accessible to anyone who wants to jump into a cockpit and try their hand.

Once in the air, maintaining situational awareness couldn't be easier. The full range of views is available, and all mission objectives are clearly indicated - just point and fly. Remarkably well-acted radio communications maintain the atmosphere



A bad day for the Goodyear Blimp!



Targeted the big, green, flying torpedo, sir!



Des can already smell the kippers

ALL IN A DAYS WORK

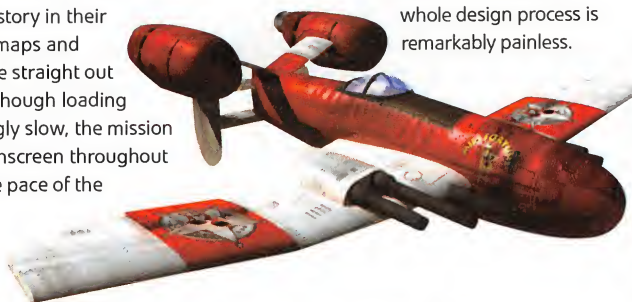
That's a heck of a day at the office! Take off from a paper bag at 5000 feet; shoot everything with a British accent; and then steal a plane while it's doing what planes do. The combination of a simple flight model, explosive action, and first-class cutscenes all add up to a game that you experience rather than just play.



Seamless is probably the best way to describe the interface in *Crimson Skies*, with each step pulling the experience together rather than breaking it up. The mission briefings are well-scripted, forming part of the story in their own right, and the maps and route animations are straight out of *Indiana Jones*. Although loading times are frustratingly slow, the mission objectives remain onscreen throughout the process, and the pace of the aerial action more than makes up for the delay. Each screen sticks with the 30s theme, and all actions are explained well. A terrific range of setup options is available, and almost every aspect of the instant action missions can be specified in detail.

Those with a bent for aircraft design will be more than happy with *Crimson Skies*, as the range of configuration options puts most traditional flight sims to shame. Weapons can be specified, down to the level of ammunition type, as can the weight and type of armour and engine size. Want a rocket-armed hot rod that can take a few punches? Just find the cash and design your own. Guns, rockets, cannons and bombs - all

can be had for a price and retrofitted to that experimental aircraft you stole last week. Colours and artwork can also be specified, dragging you still further into the *Crimson Skies* experience, and the whole design process is remarkably painless.



Zeppelin to zeppelin

The MS Gaming Zone supports *Crimson Skies*, with the level of online interest already quite impressive. The atmosphere generated in the singleplayer game translates surprisingly well to the multiplayer arena, with a number of private squadrons already well established. Joining a game is a simple process, and the ability to fly your customised favourite (assuming the host agrees) is a big plus. Capture the Flag, Deathmatch, and Zeppelin to Zeppelin (squadron) combat are available, played individually or as part of a group, with LAN

and modem games also catered for. Given the simplified flight model, online *Crimson Skies* should attract a much wider audience than most flight sims, resulting in a more interesting time for all!

Individual aspects of *Crimson Skies* can be faulted if you look hard enough - some games have got better graphics (but not many); the flight model is intentionally basic; and the story, despite being an integral part of the experience, is basically as linear as they come. Those who feel the need to quibble further will also note that, while the music is terrific, there is no doubt that the sound effects are fairly average, and the game could certainly have been longer.

But if you're looking that hard, then you're missing the point. This is a package deal and, as a package, *Crimson Skies* is the most enjoyable gaming experience that I have had in years. Remember the first time you saw a firstperson shooter, or that first attempt at realtime strategy? *Crimson Skies* has that same innovative, fresh feel about it. Those wary of flight sims couldn't hope for a better introduction, and the sad hardcore set should put the Jane's manual to one side for a few hours and just have some fun!

Major Des McNicholas

PCPP

FOR

- Fast-paced action
- Great atmosphere
- Truly Innovative
- Great fun!

AGAINST

- Prone to crashes
- Fairly high-end system requirements
- Sound FX need a bit of a tweak
- Too short

OVERALL

Smoke me some kippers, I'll be back for breakfast!

89%



"YOU WANT CONTENT WITH THAT?"

You want it all.
You want games news and you want it now.
You want the latest reviews and you want them real.
You want downloads and you want them first.
You want your favourite games magazines online.
You want contentment.

next
more content

DIRT TRACK RACING

Bloody hell, it's here at last!



DETAILS

GENRE

Racing Sim

MULTIPLAYER

Yes (1-10 via LAN, Internet)

DEVELOPER

Ratbag Games

PUBLISHER

Wizard Works

DISTRIBUTOR

Jack of all Games

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

G

NEED

P-266, 32Mb RAM, 65Mb HDD

WANT

PII-300, 64Mb RAM, 210Mb HDD, 3D Videocard, 3D Soundcard (DS3D, EAX)



Gee, makes you proud to be an Aussie, don't it?

Holden's precision driving team needs some practice

Since the dawn of time, man - well, okay, computer programmers, actually - has felt the need to design racing simulators. From unrealistic gravity defying arcade action, to finely tuned and well-oiled licensed simulators, the variety has been as intoxicating as the exhaust from a Monaro. So it comes as some surprise to find a massively popular style of real world racing that has gone untouched by programmers' hands. That is, until just recently.

Ratbag Games from Adelaide, maker of the highly acclaimed futuristic racer Powerslide, has taken full advantage of the fact that no developer had tapped in the exciting world of dirt track racing. As a result, the team went about creating what turned out to be one of the best racing sims of 1999 in DIRT Track Racing.

Why are talking about a game from last year? Well, because it was initially designed for the American market where the sport draws capacity crowds regularly, so we never saw it

released locally. Aside from that, the crew at Ratbag had something special in store for a locally released version.

Cross-over appeal

DIRT Track Racing is one of those rare racing titles that will interest fans of both arcade racing titles and sim racing games alike. The short length of the races, the intense competition, and the no-holds-barred nature of the racing will appeal to gamers who prefer an arcade-style experience. While the game's career mode, depth of options, and superb physics model offer endless possibilities for the fans of simulation-style racing.

Regardless of which side of these double white lines you drive on, there's a wealth of potential in DIRT Track Racing. The damage can be set to simulation, arcade, or just

turned off. Additional options that affect the gameplay include: tyre wear, transmission, vehicle handling, and even cockpit jitter. The tuning of the cars is very flexible and impacts directly on the gameplay as well; wheel tuning, tyre pressure, brake strength, steering lock, rebound dampening, and weight distribution are some of the many elements that can be adjusted.

Another area of realism in the game is vehicle damage, albeit sadly not in the visual sense, but too much contact with walls and other opponents can ruin your chances of winning. When racing in a tight pack of cars, it's always tempting to knock the cars around you, yet too much bumping on the front end of the car will do significant damage to the engine and put you out of the race. The same goes for nailing cars in the side. Most racing games don't make enough of this feature, while taking the paint of one too many cars in

DTR will cause the handling of the car to quickly deteriorate. In short, the damage model is very realistic and forces the player to have to actually use strategy to win races.



ONLINE

www.ratbaggames.com/games_dtr_main.htm
The official site

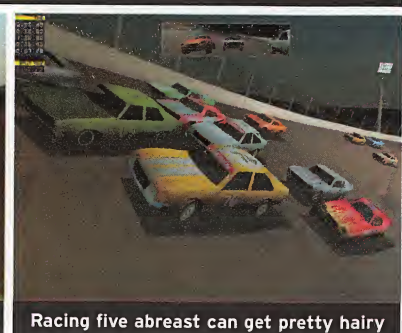
newcastle.speedway.isn.ownline.com
See the real deal

www.geocities.com/motorcity/factory/5223
One of the better fansites around



THE GROOVE

Something unique to this style of racing is "the groove." A water truck wets the surface before each race, softening the dirt or clay. A groove then forms during the course of the race on the most common driving line. It makes this area of the track hard and slippery, creating a very tactical style of racing.



HOLDEN FANS FANTASY

Dirt Track Racing gives players the unique opportunity to hop behind the wheel of an assortment of classic Holden hotrods, each featuring a variety of skins, including:

1968 HK Monaro
1977 Kingswood
1972 LJ Torana
1976 LX Torana
1978 VB Commodore
1998 VT Commodore
SS Commodore



A brilliant career

There are two game modes for singleplayer. Quick Race is essentially an arcade mode, offering all 30 tracks, and all 24 cars within the 3 classes. The Career mode, on the other hand, gives players the chance to work their way up from a rookie with a beaten up old bomb, to become a championship driver with a powerhouse of a racing car. Players start off with a measly \$1000, enough for the purchase of a basic stock car from the junkyard. The aim then is to race for prize money in events from various series to be able to pay for upgrades. The money earned then goes towards making repairs, entering events, paying for practice sessions, and buying better cars.

As you become more successful, offers start coming in from sponsors, who will pay appearance money. This ongoing bidding war through out the game adds a nice strategy element. Other ways to make money are by winning a series, placing in a main event, and

securing the fastest qualifying time. It's this lure of money that offers players the incentive to keep racing until they can afford a top of the line model. Essentially, the Career mode is incredibly challenging, offering much more replay value than the quick races.

Adding yet more replay value, DTR also provides multiplayer racing online through a client-server model. While in a chat room, players can watch a race that is taking place from a variety of camera angles. Further to this, the local release includes the full US version, enabling players to compete online against all the Yanks on their tracks.

Holden, I'm coming

As mentioned earlier, Ratbag has done something special for the game's Australian release, completely localising all the tracks with circuits spread across both Australia and New Zealand. Even more impressive is the acquisition of a license from Holden to include

six classic models. From as early as 1968 through to 1998, players can jump behind the wheel of a Monaro, Torana, Kingswood or Commodore, with each model coming in a variety of skins. Accordingly, this is not just a cosmetic change, but the physics and handling have been adjusted to suit the new cars.

One cosmetic change that *should* have been made is changing all the Holden cars to be right-hand drives. Instead, we're stuck with sitting in the passenger seat on the left. Also the sound effects are somewhat lacking, with no noticeable change in engine sounds between cars and no music or voice-over commentary during the race.

Minor shortfalls aside, Dirt Track Racing is a breath of fresh air in the densely populated world of racing sims. If action-packed racing with an aggressive career model is what you desire, then Dirt Track Racing offers the complete package.

Mike Wilcox

PCPP

FOR

- Holden cars
- Incredibly accurate handling
- A very strong career mode

AGAINST

- Audio lacking in some areas
- No visual car damage at all
- Cars look a little on the dull side

OVERALL

A serious sim that's actually loads of fun

90%

STAR TREK VOYAGER ELITE FORCE

Captain's Log: Yes, okay, it's another Star Trek game...

DETAILS

GENRE
Firstperson Shooter

MULTIPLAYER
Yes (TCP/IP, IPX, Modem)

DEVELOPER
Raven

PUBLISHER
Activision

DISTRIBUTOR
Activision

AVAILABLE
Now

RATING
M

NEED
P-233, 32Mb RAM
3DVideocard OpenGL

WANT
PIII-600, 64Mb RAM



Bugger, the Starfleet Academy didn't teach me anything about situations like this



Scrambled eggs again? Damn replicator!

A PERFECT SEVEN

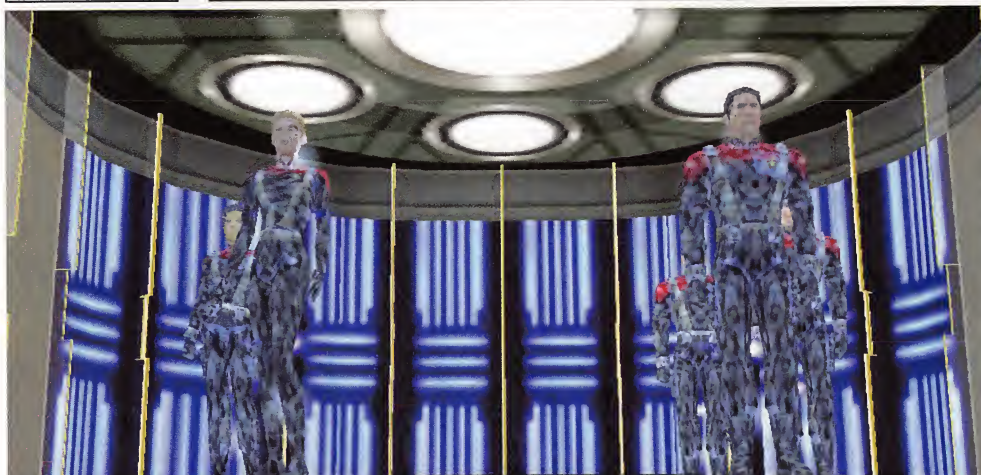
One thing about Voyager has always bugged me. If the Borg are so obsessed with perfection, why don't they all have Seven of Nine's arse? Surely their collective consciousness would realise that there was no need to assimilate any more backsides after Seven's. "We are the Borg. Your technological and cultural distinctiveness will be added to our own. Except for your butt, we've already got a top one of those."



Force several advantages. The game is very stable on a vast range of PC configurations, it looks great and plays smoothly even on modest PCs, it will be easy to modify and its multiplayer code is fast and stable, too.

The designers have also taken some inspiration from Epic's Unreal, providing all of Elite Force's weapons with a secondary firing mode that gives the player more variety in their choice of death-dealing techniques. Raven has even added a touch of Deus Ex by making stealth a viable tactical option in certain sections of the game. In fact, the overall design of Elite Force is the best thing about it.

Of course, you'd expect the voice acting to be among the best you've ever heard in a game (*Natch - Ed*). And it is. But one thing may come as a shock to you: Seven's voice is a fraud! For some reason hers is the only non-authentic voiceover, instead being done by someone named Joan Buddenhagen!



Five to beam down, Scotty or whatever your name is

ONLINE

www.eliteforcefiles.com
Elite Force is going to be one of those titles that gets lots of mods and this site has the most comprehensive file list and news to keep you up to date with what's happening.



Voyager has in recent years become more like a sci-fi version of the Love Boat than a Trek-based action series. Stars like Jason Alexander have popped in, relationships have been used as the crutch of too many stories and Captain Stubbing - I mean Janeway - spends more time navel-gazing than stargazing. Then there's Doc - aka Ziegfried from Get Smart - played by his Holographic counterpart, Washington the bartender (Tom Paris) and Julie the cruise director (Neelix), while even Tuvok gets in on the act by doing an impersonation of a bulkhead.

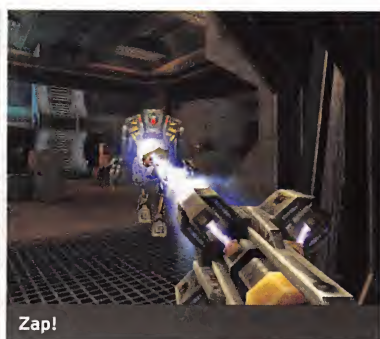
So it's about time then that we had a good action yarn to get our teeth into, and the fact that it's an interactive one is even better. The story begins with the new Hazard Team in training for a rescue mission, and quickly moves on to an unprovoked attack on Voyager by an alien probe, possibly instigated by a recent encounter with Eric Cartman's ass.

Unreal Quakin'

Elite Force is one of the first licensed fruits of the Quake 3 engine, and as such could also be described as the singleplayer game that Quake 3 wasn't. The use of id's engine has given Elite



A lesson in console awareness



Zap!



Just pray that those things don't get released



Crew members can lend a hand



Bouncy map!

BLOW UP YOUR CONSOLE

Why are Starfleet engineers so highly regarded when they can't even design a control console that doesn't explode when you look at it the wrong way? As Janeway would say, "All right, everyone listen up, we're heading into a dangerous area of space. As you know there's a strong chance that one or more of your consoles will explode in your face for no apparent reason. We started this journey with a crew of around 140. A hundred or so have died since then and strangely enough we still have a crew of 140, but I don't want anyone getting complacent!"



Two against one? Hey, that's hardly fair...

Set Phasers To Wart Removal

What kind of dumbo military would use hand weapons that only make a nice clean wound, and sealed it up neatly at the same time? Sure hand phasers can vaporise their targets, but they don't ever seem to be used like that. It's against the Prime Directive which clearly states, "All aliens engaged in combat must be wounded neatly, in a non-life-threatening location, and be left with a smaller injury than that made by a .22 target pistol loaded with M&Ms."

Raven has realised that such weapons in a firstperson shooter would have been about as exciting as an evening with Tom Paris and have come up with a few new, but sadly unimaginative, models. The I-Mod is the first you'll encounter - an anti-Borg weapon developed by Seven. The other guns unfortunately follow the usual pattern: a rocket launcher, a rapid-firing machinegun



type thing, and a grenade launcher,

essentially the same kit you had when playing through the first Quake! The only innovative aspect of the weaponry is that there are only two ammo types in the game rather than a different one for each gun.

The bad guys' AI also leaves something to be desired, particularly after the quality of Half-Life in this area. Much of the enemies' behaviour is like very early FPS titles and not very sophisticated in terms of cunning and skill. They basically just lumber in your direction until you kill them.

Donkey Kong Anyone?

Easily and sadly the worst feature of the game however is the ending.

It is rather hard to be really positive about the story at this point, as a bad ending can easily destroy a good tale, and that is certainly the case with Elite Force. In fact, I was reminded of one of those boss monsters from 16-bit arcade and console games that hopped up and down and spat glowing balls at you. That is just what the boss at the end of Elite Force is like, except he doesn't hop up and down. The only thing that makes this guy look remotely tough is that he has around a billion health points and that's about it. It also doesn't help that this ending comes all too quickly either. On the normal difficulty level, one full day is all that's required to finish Elite Force. A sad end to a great game.

George Soropos

PCPP

FOR

- It's Star Trek!
- Well that's enough for some people
- Great story until the end

AGAINST

- Singleplayer game is too short
- Boring weapons
- Enemy AI is dumb

OVERALL

Hugely enjoyable and ever so nearly a classic

86%

HALF-LIFE COUNTER-STRIKE

The brilliant multiplayer-only compilation pack

DETAILS

GENRE

Multiplayer FPS

MULTIPLAYER

Duh!

DEVELOPER

Various

PUBLISHER

Sierra

DISTRIBUTOR

Jack of All Games

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

M

NEED

P11-300, 64Mb RAM

WANT

P111-500, 128Mb RAM, cable net connection



Gun-toting crates are best avoided



Trust me, cut the green wire...



...Oops!

In the beginning, God said unto the pointy-haired bosses, "Lo, let there be LANs and high-speed net connections in the workplace." The pointy-haired bosses fearfully complied with His wishes, and there was much rejoicing, followed quickly by crackdowns on porn downloads. Then man created Half-Life: Counter-Strike, and there was much rejoicing. Thereafter, there followed an era where God was held wholly responsible for the skyrocketing levels of unemployment, divorce and poor personal hygiene... And there was much rejoicing.

Though highly derivative and partially (cough) lacking in historical accuracy, the above scenario also presents a chilling insight into the future, post-Half Life: Counter-Strike release. Such is the addictive nature of this pack that those under its spell will forsake all that they once held dear: a weekly pay cheque, the affection of a significant other and expensive anti-perspirant cologne sprays.

As if Counter-Strike and Team Fortress Classic weren't popular enough on their own,

they've now been released as major components of one of the greatest multiplayer packs in gaming history. Included in this pack are the multiplayer versions of the acclaimed Half-Life and Half-Life: Opposing Force, as well as Counter-Strike, Team Fortress Classic and three additional mods. Multiplayer Half-Life and OpFor are both quite enjoyable, but most (if not all) players will treat these games as a training ground for the real meat

of the package: Counter-Strike and Team Fortress Classic.

Oh, the terror

Counter-Strike features four very different play modes, all of which are related to the type of map they are played on. In Defusion matches, the Terrorists must endeavour to destroy specific objects, with the assistance of a generous quantity of C4. Conversely, the Counter Terrorists must attempt to successfully defuse the Terrorists' bomb in order to avert the destruction of the objects in question.

At their most basic level, Defusion maps can be played in a deathmatch-esque fashion. If the Terrorists fail to bomb the objective, but manage to wipe out the Counter Terrorists,

they win the round. The same rule applies if the Counter Terrorists manage to dispose of all the Terrorists. However, it is entirely possible for a dead Terrorist team to reign victorious if they manage to set the bomb and the Counter Terrorists fail to defuse it in time.

The objective in Hostage mode is rather obvious: the Counter Terrorists must attempt to rescue the hostages, and the Terrorists must attempt to prevent this. But, as in Defusion matches, a win can be achieved if the opposing team is simply annihilated.

Lending greater variety to the proceedings, Assassination mode transforms one of the Counter Terrorist squad members into a VIP equipped with a double-strength kevlar jacket and a pistol. Escorted by their squad mates, the VIP must try to reach a specific point on the map alive. The Terrorists are, unsurprisingly, tasked with the assassination of the VIP.

In the final mode, Escape, the Terrorists must escape the confines of their prison and rush to reach a certain point on the map. Meanwhile, the Counter Terrorists must try to eliminate the fleeing Terrorists.

A touch of class

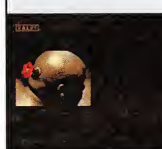
Team Fortress Classic is based on the original Team Fortress mod for Quake. It shares its tactical roots with Counter-Strike,

ONLINE

www.counter-strike.net
Official site



www.valvesoftware.com
Valve's official site



REAL WEAPONS

Though Counter-Strike makes concessions to reality, the game's guns behave like their real life counterparts. When any assault rifle is fired on full auto while running, few of the rounds fired hit the centre mass of the target. By way of comparison, when the same weapon is fired in two round bursts from a stationary, crouching position, the shot spread is far more compact, and is isolated to the centre mass of the target. Obviously, in surprise encounters at close range, firing on full auto may be necessary. However, it is much more effective to fire in short, rapid bursts of 2 or 3 rounds.



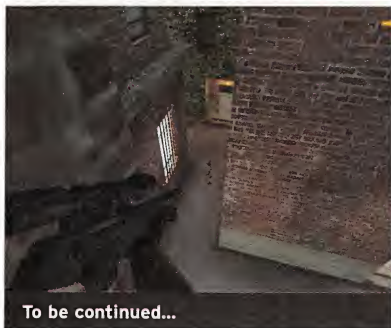
The attrition rate at the CT Defusion School was especially high



Bullets + nukes: an unhealthy combination



Drop it and run!



To be continued...

elements. Both are extremely fast-paced, and require skillfully orchestrated teamwork for longterm success. In addition, well-honed deathmatching skills will serve the player well in both games, provided rocket jumps and the like are avoided.

Half-Life: Counter-Strike also features three very interesting third party mods that make for a refreshing change from the likes of the pack's two main attractions. However, the phenomenally addictive

With their all-conquering mod now the centrepiece of a blockbuster retail release, Counter-Strike Project Leader, Minh Le, and his cohorts are living the dream of mod creators the world over. That said, Half-Life: Counter-Strike represents tremendous value for money. Its \$50 RRP places it well within the price range of the average frag seeker, which will hopefully ensure healthy retail sales.

The obvious question Half-Life owners will be asking is, "Why pay money for something that can be downloaded for free?" Well, there are several reasons why buying Counter-Strike is worthwhile.

First and foremost, each game included in this package is worth the price of admission in its own right. Yes, they're that good. Secondly, the people who made the games will be paid for their tireless efforts, and may actually accrue the funds to finance the development of more games. This argument is particularly relevant to the creators of Counter-Strike. Thirdly, it will save countless hours of downloading, especially for those with 56K connections. And finally, the Counter-Strike pack takes up far less hard drive space than separate installations of Half-Life and each of the mods. Think about it.

Brett Robinson

however it is entirely possible for a dead Terrorist team to reign victorious

but eschews that game's realism in favour of class-based, action-heavy gameplay. These classes include Marine, Engineer, Spy, Scout and the ubiquitous Sniper. Team Fortress Classic also boasts a wider variety of weapons, ranging from grenade launchers and assault rifles to double-barrelled shotguns and flamethrowers. In spite of these glaring differences in their features, Counter-Strike and Team Fortress Classic share the same basic gameplay

nature of Counter-Strike and Team Fortress Classic may mean that it will be quite some time before players even consider installing these mods. Both titles are worthy of the attention they receive, but such favouritism is also somewhat disheartening. All three additional mods show immense promise and, if given the attention they deserve, seem destined to evolve and increase in popularity at an astounding rate.

PCPP

FOR

- Addictive
- Unprecedented value for money
- No need to own Half-Life

AGAINST

- HPB's will suffer frequent lag deaths
- Immature squad mates ruin the experience

OVERALL

Tactical FPS gaming at its very best

91%

HOMEWORLD CATAclysm

Are you ready to tackle the Beast?



DETAILS

GENRE

Realtime Strategy

MULTIPLAYER

Yes (1-8 via LAN, internet)

DEVELOPER

Barking Dog

PUBLISHER

Sierra

DISTRIBUTOR

Jack of all Games

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

G8

NEED

PII-266, 32Mb RAM, 300Mb HD, 4xCD, 4MB Videocard

WANT

PIII-400, 64Mb RAM

ONLINE

homeworld.sierra.com/cataclysm/

The official site. Competitions and downloads - shazaam!



well-ofsouls.com/shipyards/hws

A great site comparing the stats of original and recurring ships between Homeworld and Cataclysm as well as a detailed backstory for those who missed the original one



www.strategyplanet.com/homeworld

For the fans



No game has done more for the noble cause of nebula effects than Homeworld

Homeworld is a monumental title in our gaming experience for a number of reasons. The first realtime strategy game to truly do the 3D control engine thing justice; a game that was so stunningly beautiful in visual design and artwork; a game that held as much interest for its singleplayer missions as its multiplayer aspects - if not more. Perhaps most of all, the solemn and touching story of a planet destroyed and a people searching for home. While minor flaws marred the mechanics of the game, the overall experience was a testament to Relic's vision of the new RTS territory.

Naturally there would be a successor to Homeworld, with the reins passed to Barking Dog to create a new stand-alone title using the Homeworld engine. And so we have Homeworld: Cataclysm. It's not a traditional sequel, but it does take Homeworld to new places. The loose threads left by the final battle for Hiigara are used as the starting point for a new

adventure that focuses on an entirely new situation and fleet from either the Kushan or Taidan fleets of the original.

The Beast is back

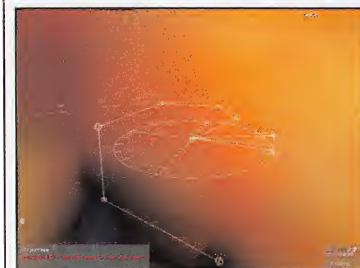
In Cataclysm, you control the Kuun-Lan, a giant mining vessel of the Somtaaw clan, one of the smaller clans seeking prominence in Hiigaran society. Fifteen years after landfall, the resettled Hiigara is becoming established, and all the time battling off Turanic raiders and Imperial Taidan forces. By an unlucky twist of fate, your engineers awaken an ancient organic entity that proceeds to infect any ships with which it comes into close contact. As the mighty figures of the universe encounter "the Beast", they all fall to it. As the only fleet to face the Beast and survive, you must take up your weapons to eradicate this new scourge.

One of the nicest touches in Cataclysm is that you start out with a mining operation - not an armada. So naturally, the emphasis of weapons and tactics is quite different from the

original. You must completely transform the Kuun-Lan and create a combat force as means allow. Your technology must adapt existing vessels to new roles due to the restrictions of the mining vessel, Kuun-Lan, the new mothership. An example is the foot soldier, the Acolyte. Without the capabilities to create

WAYPOINTS

You have the option of setting waypoints for your units in three ways: linear, circular and end-to-end. Waypoints are ideal for establishing patrol routes and avoiding large enemy forces.





Docking is so cool, you just won't stop



Better red than dead

INFECTION

Like all great epidemics - there is no cure (yet at least!) for the scourge of the Beast. There are a number of rules of engagement then:

1. Fighters are generally the only ships manoeuvrable to cause any damage without the risk of infection.
2. Don't come in contact or collide with any craft, unless you are a Kamikaze. That's means you, ramming frigates!
3. Keep your bigger craft the hell away from the big Beast ships.
4. Research a cure quick!



Scenes like this are so stunning you barely notice the crap lensflare

corvette class craft, research allows you to join two Acolytes to form a small corvette, the ACV.

Aside from combat units, there are many small niche units that offer vastly different opportunities in battle. Firstly, the mimic class ships provide some serious covert options. This ship and its larger equivalent, the MCV, can "mimic" ships of your fleet, those of your enemy and asteroids. This offers the chance to eavesdrop and any number of ways to bluff. The Leech is a brilliant little locust that leeches on an enemy ship until the ship is destroyed and can even collect resources from its host!

Generally there are a lot more options for your craft to play different roles. Combined with the miscellaneous smaller craft, there is the opportunity to be creative and play Cataclysm in a different way to Homeworld. So for you Mothership veterans, Cataclysm offers a new lease of life in this territory.

Corny script

The overall tone of Cataclysm is a little disappointing. Having to adapt a fleet to a new task of battling an insurmountable threat is thrilling, but the subject matter of a Borg-esque entity overrunning all and sundry is familiar sci-fi territory - a little too familiar. Add to this the corny (that's right CORNY) voice acting, and the mood that Homeworld achieved so successfully is all but lost in the sequel. The thrills that the singleplayer missions gave in Homeworld just aren't there, as level after level of similar looking space unfolds in Cataclysm. One problem is that you aren't discovering this universe for the first time, so the wonder of the Garden of Kadesh or the Bentusi isn't recreated. There isn't the grandeur and purpose that coloured the original.

It's a pity that the singleplayer missions are much the same as the original - impossible to complete first time through.



The 3D environment means that attacks can come from any direction

the different sensor modes are better integrated, which makes control supremely easy

They are heavily scripted which is good and bad. It's no fun to lose half of your fleet, if not the lot, from an unexpected event that offers you no chance to react. While it's exciting to have the situation change at the drop of a hat, all but the psychically-inclined will experience the thrill of completing a mission without at least one trial run.

However, the gameplay of Cataclysm is a massive improvement on Homeworld. The different sensor modes are better integrated, which makes control supremely easy. The biggest improvement is in the broad overview mode - the sensors manager. All orders can now be delivered in the sensors manager - an entire mission can be played in this way, if so desired. The representation of three-dimensional space is better achieved by framing, making targeting of ships and coordinates that much easier. There is also the ability to speed up time, especially useful when

travelling long distances or harvesting resources at the completion of a mission. But perhaps the most useful feature now introduced is the ability to set waypoints for all craft. This allows a squadron to be left to do the defensive rounds, while you concentrate on more interesting things.

Essentially, Cataclysm is Homeworld as it should have been, from a game engine perspective anyway. Whether you like the story or not this time around is largely personal - I didn't. What is undeniable though, is the fact that Cataclysm is a superior gaming experience because of the subtle tweaks and additions to the mechanics of the game. It's more complete, more logical and much easier to navigate. This means that multiplayer will be a better experience and ultimately more rewarding. Cataclysm is a must for strategy enthusiasts and - hell - all serious gamers, too!

John Dewhurst

PCPP

FOR

- What Homeworld should have been
- A rather streamlined interface
- Much greater tactical depth

AGAINST

- Lacklustre story
- Very heavily scripted missions

OVERALL

A worthy heir to Homeworld's throne

90%

MTV SKATEBOARDING

Featuring the well-known Andy McDonald, apparently

DETAILS

GENRE

Extreme Sports

MULTIPLAYER

No

DEVELOPER

Darkblack

PUBLISHER

THQ

DISTRIBUTOR

Ozisoft

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

G

NEED

PII-233, 32Mb RAM, 4Mb Videocard

WANT

PII-300, 64Mb RAM, 16Mb Videocard



ONLINE

mtvsports.thq.com/skateboarding/
www.sikids.com/magazine/tips/macdonald/



PCPP

FOR

- Exciting...
- Button-mashing...
- Extreme-sporting!

AGAINST

- Physics can be rather dodgy
- No multiplayer

OVERALL

A fun game with too many flaws to make it compulsory

65%

Skating - the pastime of the ne'er-do-well and social outcast alike. We've all had a crack at skating and those of us who stuck with it are probably international skate pros. The rest of us can calm our frustrated dreams of stardom in MTV Skateboarding, the latest THQ venture into yoof culture.

This is a straight out sports action title and it's a barrel of fun. The physics on the board is generally good and the illusion of speed and motion is impressive. You have access to three different varieties of moves: grabs, flips and grind/flat. In combination with the free rotate keys, you can complete such impressive tricks as the Japan Air 360, Stalefish, Air Walk and the 50:50 Grind (*John, it almost sounds like you know what you're talking about - Ed*). There are sixty tricks in all, granting an unbelievable number of possible combos. It's a simple control system, easy to use, and makes pulling off tricks entirely possible - if not effortless.

There are ten modes to tackle in the singleplayer game. Much of the game takes place in a number of isolated courses with bowls, ramps, rails and other obstacles to demonstrate your skills. Here you can take on challenges including career mode, MTV hunt (a treasure hunt around the course) and freestyle.

There are also stunt courses where you can gain speed and fly off ramps, in an effort to land ungodly tricks for points. Sound like fun? It is! So if it's the dizzying heights of the ramps that you crave or some high speed rail slide action, there are options of play to suit you.

Top 40 shite

Despite being very user friendly, MTV Skateboarding is nonetheless flawed. The engine can have you changing direction, denying physics, at the touch of a button. You can also fall off your board for no reason or skate sideways on a wall in explicably. This wouldn't be a problem except that many of the game modes penalise you harshly for coming off your board. Worst of all is the fact that unlocked tracks and features don't stay unlocked when you return to the game later - poor form. Apart from that there's no multiplayer to speak of - I guess the seams of a Playstation port are showing. These are some major issues that pull the game down.

Instead of using an instrumental background soundtrack, MTV Skateboarding has a selection of the latest hard rock/rap/punk hits for your selection. Featuring the likes of Cypress Hill, System of a Down, Deftones and Pennywise, the soundtrack is a fair attempt to cover all the



bases of the fickle tastes of yoof culture. If you expect to play this game for more than an hour though, these songs will begin to get on your nerves like any of that top 40 shite. The songs rock for a while but long term enjoyment is lacking.

Knowing next to nothing about skating probably helps, but this game is a simple concept done well. With the different options of play and the well-designed arenas, this is a hell of a lot of fun. Pity about the frustrating flaws, since for the most part, MTV Skateboarding is exciting gaming.

John Dewhurst

V-RALLY 2

Vigorous Rally? Vomit Rally? Vexing Rally? Who knows?

DETAILS

GENRE
Rally driving

MULTIPLAYER
Yes (1-2 via splitscreen)

DEVELOPER
Eden Studios

PUBLISHER
Infogrames

DISTRIBUTOR
Ozisoft

AVAILABLE
Now

RATING
G

NEED
P200, 32Mb RAM

WANT
PII-300, 64Mb RAM

ONLINE

www.vrally.com
Game's official site



www.rallysport.com
Sport's official site



PCPP

FOR

- Convincing physics
- Stacks of stages
- Track editor

AGAINST

- Unconvincing engine noise
- No real multiplayer

OVERALL
For both casual and diehard racing fans alike

81%



With the exceptional draw distance, those arrows are somewhat redundant



Mike survives the Racing Game Screenshot Curse intact

TRACK EDITOR

With a little getting use to, the Track editor will have you pumping out challenging tracks in no time. Its grid based interface would have worked better with a mouse, however the arrow keys do the job. There's almost no limit to the designs you can create. Hey, look at the hills I built!



Driving games tend to be just like girl groups these days, pumped out every five minutes in the hope of a quick splash of cash. It's all about good looks and a catchy hook - bad 80s cover songs in the case of some groups, and a collection of exclusive unlockable cars in the case of some games. Well, if the soundtrack for V-Rally 2 Expert Edition is anything to go by, the group responsible - Sin - would have your average four-piece fly-girl outfit wetting their pants with fear.

To put the game in context is not an easy task; it's neither an arcade racer like Sega Rally 2 nor a full simulation, like Colin McRae. V-Rally 2 sits in the middle, offering a playable interpretation of both worlds. As a platform for your high-speed thrills, there are four playable game modes. The Arcade mode pits you head-to-head against three other contenders, all racing on the same narrow stretches of track using a blend of skill and brute force to edge ahead of the field.

Time Trials allow you to race against a ghost car, based on your fastest lap time, while the Trophy again pits four cars on the one track, with European and World trophies to be won before you're allowed to attempt the Expert trophy. In this mode

vehicle damage is purely visual and has no affect on performance. While in Championship mode, damage is not only visible, but effects the vehicle's handling, and drivers will need to use valuable race time to pay for the necessary repairs.

Lay down some dirt

Adding a whole new element to the game, the inclusion of a Track editor allows you to create, race and share your very own masterpiece, bump for bump, corner by corner. As well as track layout, any of the driving surfaces are available, as are weather conditions and times across the day to race, including an impressive night time mode. The virtual garage has 26 available cars, 16 officially licensed world rally cars,



plus 10 bonus classic cars including the Audi Quattro and Lancia Stratos. The idea being to unlock cars and further tracks as you successfully progress through the stages. Your high speed sightseeing trip takes in over 80 new tracks and stages across 12 countries, ranging from the red dusty trails of outback Australia to the swerving snow-laden chicanes of Sweden and the French Alps.

Graphically, the game's a treat, featuring a configurable framerate and multiple camera views, and nice touches like transparent windows and reflections. With the chequered flag in sight, V-Rally 2 is just right for pick-up-and-play first-timers, yet still offers some seriously tough racing in the expert levels for seasoned racers. However, it remains to be seen whether it will be overshadowed by Mr McRae's next offering.

Mike Wilcox

RUGBY 2001

Off the interchange bench comes Hugh's brother...

DETAILS

GENRE

Sports

MULTIPLAYER

Yes

DEVELOPER

EA Sports

PUBLISHER

Electronic Arts

DISTRIBUTOR

Electronic Arts

AVAILABLE

Now

RATING

G

NEED

P-200, 32Mb RAM

WANT

PII-300, 64Mb RAM



The sideline is clearly arbitrary to some players



Cue the Barry White soundtrack



A fan to fan the fans

ONLINE

www.easports.com
The home of all things EA and Sport



PCPP

FOR

- Retains the sport's complexities
- Quite realistic

AGAINST

- Lacks polish
- Commentary gets pretty repetitive

OVERALL

Go you good thing!
Put a gap in 'em!
Etc! Etc!

80%

Rugby 2001 makes an admirable effort of incorporating all the confusing rules and options of Rugby Union into a game that remains exciting and approachable. The game engine has been completely overhauled, now using motion-captured models in genuine 3D.

EA Sports also developed a biomechanical model that governs the movement of each player, which is related to their physique and statistics. To give you an idea of the detail the developer has gone to, there are nearly thirty different pass catching animations, including wobbles, clean catches and flick-ons.

The AI teams play a relatively clean game with few off-sides, whereas human players are more likely to play the game like the real thing. This means games are of the free-flowing sort that will be appreciated by those of us residing south of the equator. Games range in difficulty; an easy game matches you up against large, effeminate buffoons who seem to have an aversion to tackling (a critical attribute at a world class standard). The hardest games remind you what it must be like for ugly people - no matter how hard you try you just can't score. Close games force both teams to adopt a more realistic style of play. Penalties and drop goals - both effectively simulated - will become crucial point scoring methods.

Sweating and grunting

As well as a World Cup Tournament, the other championships included in the game are the Tri-Nations, Bledisloe Cup, Six Nations and Calcutta Cup. Two-on-two multiplayer (on the same PC or via a LAN) will provide much entertainment amongst mates. Just add pizza and beer. In addition, there is a useful training mode where you can either practice special moves (Hadoken not included) or go through a step-by-step tutorial. This is very useful for getting the more intricate backline moves worked out.

Although the gameplay is realistic, there are still some minor glitches in the AI. Computer players have exceptionally strong rucking abilities making it almost impossible to achieve a turn-over, let alone retain possession without having to wait for the referee to call a scrum. Other inexcusable problems include incorrect text messages regarding substitutions and an inability to vary scrummaging options by picking the ball up with the lock.

For such a comparatively marginal sport (in terms of computer simulations) as Rugby Union, the developer has produced a well-rounded package that will satisfy even the most fanatical rugby supporters.

Toby Norton-Smith



BIGGEST ISSUE EVER!

www.rollingstoneweb.com.au

Rolling Stone

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PORN
KING**

**THE
HALF
NAKED
TRUTH ABOUT**

Blink- 182

**Christina
Aguilera**

**"It Was Wrong of
Eminem to Dis Me"**



ON SALE NOW!

SCORE LIST

This month you have to guess what we're highlighting

GAME NAME SCORE # ISSUE



Dino Crisis

12 O'Clock High	68	#46
Abomination	81	#44
AOE2: The Conquerors	90	#54
Age of Wonders	84	#46
Airport Inc.	42	#48
Akuma: Demonspawn	50	#47
Alien Nations	75	#52
All Star Tennis 2000	62	#54
Allegiance	81	#50
Alpha Centauri: Alien X-fire	83	#45
Arcatera	49	#53
Army Men Air Tactics	65	#50
Army Men In Space	66	#48
Asheron's Call	88	#50
Atlantis II	78	#50
BG: Sword Coast	76	#41
Baldur's Gate 2	93	#53
Battlecruiser 3000	72	#50
Battlezone 2	85	#48
Beetle Crazy Cup	74	#49
Century of Warfare	85	#54
C&C Tiberian Sun	94	#41
Civ: Test of Time	81	#41
Codename: Eagle	64	#46
Cricket 2000	70	#51
Croc 2	78	#48
Crusaders of Might & Magic	75	#50
Cutthroats	67	#43
Daikatana	67	#52

Deus Ex

DEVELOPER: Ion Storm

PUBLISHER: Eidos

DISTRIBUTOR: Ozisoft

WHAT WE SAID THEN:

"The plot retains an intensity and credibility - beyond the predictable, hackneyed bollocks usually mustered by even the best games - because it convinces the player that the course of action he or she chooses to take actually matters. In a word, it's immersive."

98% in PCPP #51

Dark Reign 2	89	#51
Delta Force 2	78	#46
Descent 3: Mercenaries	65	#47
Dick Johnson V8 Challenge	45	#46
Disciples	81	#43
Dogs of War	72	#51
Dracula	58	#47
Driver	71	#43
Dungeon Keeper 2	90	#41
Earth 2150	91	#53
Enemy Engaged	91	#50
Europe in Flames	81	#54
Evolva	71	#50

F/A 18 Hornet	91	#47
FIFA 2000	88	#45
Fighting Steel	80	#41
Final Fantasy VIII	77	#47
Flight Unlimited III	89	#43
Flying Heroes	76	#51
Force Commander	58	#49
Fox Sports NBA 2000	56	#44
Freespace 2	95	#44
Gorky 17	65	#47
Grand Prix 3	88	#53

Diablo II

DEVELOPER: Blizzard North

PUBLISHER: Blizzard

DISTRIBUTOR: Havas

WHAT WE SAID THEN:

"The Amazon is somewhat similar to the Rogue from the original game in that she is very proficient with a bow, but Amazons are particularly adept in the art of throwing spears, javelin and the like. Ranged combat is the Amazon's forte, but she is equally skilled in melee combat, and can wield every weapon, making her a very versatile character."

89% in PCPP #53

Dino Crisis

DEVELOPER: Capcom

PUBLISHER: Virgin

DISTRIBUTOR: Ozisoft

WHAT WE SAID THEN:

"You play Regina, a foxy young thing sent in as part of a military unit to find the mysterious Dr Kirk. The place is empty until members of your unit are picked off, one by one, by ravenous dinosaurs. The cogs start turning in your beautiful but rather numb head: 'There's definitely something WRONG here.'"

68% in PCPP #53

Grand Prix World	83	#49
Grand Theft Auto 2	84	#44
Ground Control	90	#52
Guardians of Darkness	30	#41
Gulf War: Desert Hammer	55	#45
Gunship!	89	#50
Half-Life: Opposing Force	90	#45
Heavy Metal: FAKK 2	80	#54
HOMM III: Armageddon's Blade	70	#45
Hidden and Dangerous	88	#41
H & D: Fight for Freedom	45	#46
Homeworld	95	#41
Icwind Dale	80	#52

Drakan

DEVELOPER: Surreal

PUBLISHER: Psygnosis

DISTRIBUTOR: GT Interactive

WHAT WE SAID THEN:

"In Rynn - she of the gorgeous green eyes - Drakan has a heroine to rival Tomb Raider. Despite being the perfect game for retentives to play Spot the Influence, Drakan possesses sufficient distinctive flashes of inspiration and reveals itself to be so damn entertaining that its more unoriginal aspects are quickly forgotten."

84% in PCPP #43

I-War: Defiance	72	#44
Imperium Galactica 2	92	#46
Indiana Jones & Infernal Machine	69	#45
Interstate '82	60	#47
Invictus	51	#48
Jane's USAF	86	#44
KA-52 Alligator	65	#48
King of Dragon Pass	31	#52
Klingon Academy	83	#53



GOLD AWARD

90-94



PLATINUM AWARD

95-100

Kingpin	86	#41
Kiss: Psycho Circus	64	#54
Lemmings Revolution	70	#51
Links 2000	79	#44
M25 Racer	25	#45
Madden NFL 2000	84	#44
Majesty	79	#49
Man of War II	15	#40
Martian Gothic	57	#50
Maximum Flight	78	#52
MDK 2	84	#52
Mech Collection	63	#54
Messiah	89	#48
Metal Fatigue	76	#53
Midtown Madness 2	82	#54
Might & Magic VIII	55	#49
Millennium Racer	70	#50
Motocross Madness 2	85	#51
MS Flight Sim 2000	84	#44
Nascar Revolution	35	#48
Nascar Road Racing	28	#41
Nations: Fighter Command	82	#44
NBA Inside Drive 2000	68	#46
NBA Live 2000	90	#45
Need for Speed: High Stakes	89	#41
Need For Speed: Porsche 2000	75	#52
Nerf Arena	70	#46
NHL Championship 2000	78	#46
Nocturne	79	#46
Nox	83	#48
Omikron: Nomad Soul	93	#44
Pandora's Box	68	#47
Panzer Elite	85	#46
Pharaoh	88	#45
Phoenix	64	#46
Pizza Syndicate	52	#54

Gabriel Knight 3

DEVELOPER: Sierra

PUBLISHER: Sierra

DISTRIBUTOR: Dataflow

WHAT WE SAID THEN:

"Cancel all social engagements because you are about to say goodbye to your nights, weekends, and very probably lose your job, get kicked out of school and go through a messy separation with your significant other. Because Gabriel Knight 3 is one hell of an addictive and complex mystery experience."

87% in PCPP #44

Prince of Persia 3D	65	#43
Pro Pinball: Fantastic Journey	88	#47
Puma Street Soccer	75	#46
Rainbow Six: Rogue Spear	92	#44

Rally Championship 2000	88	#45
Rayman 2	89	#45
Reach for the Stars	79	#54
Re-Volt	82	#41
Revenant	82	#45
Rising Sun	82	#48
Rogue Spear	92	#44
Rollcage II	80	#50

Planescape: Torment

DEVELOPER: Black Isle

PUBLISHER: Interplay

DISTRIBUTOR: Interplay

WHAT WE SAID THEN:

"Do not hesitate to play Planescape: Torment. It is precisely what the RPG industry needed, being complex, mature and something more than a simple find a magic object story. Thought-provoking, touching and frightening, it's the closest gaming has come to reliving the interactive fiction of pen and paper gaming."

91% in PCPP #46

R'coaster Tyc: Added Attractions	81	#45
Septerra Core	84	#47
Seven Kingdoms 2	86	#44
Shadow Company	74	#44
Shadow Watch	65	#49
Shadow Man	61	#41
Shogun: Total War	92	#50
The Sims	90	#47
The Sims Livin' Large	88	#54
Slave Zero	55	#47
Soldier of Fortune	86	#49
Soul Reaver: Legacy Of Kain	81	#43
Soulbringer	80	#51
South Park Rally	41	#47
Spec Ops 2	60	#46
Speed Demons	55	#47
Starlancer	93	#49
Star Trek: Armada	56	#49
Star Trek: Hidden Evil	69	#46
Star Trek: Starfleet Command	87	#43
Super Hornet	63	#54
SU-27 Flanker 2.0	83	#44
Swat 3	90	#46
Sydney 2000	85	#52
Tachyon	84	#54
Thandor	69	#54
Theocracy	76	#49
The Wheel of Time	84	#45
Thief Gold	96	#45
Thief II: The Metal Age	95	#49
Theme Park World	80	#45



Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation

Quake III: Arena

DEVELOPER: id

PUBLISHER: Activision

DISTRIBUTOR: Activision

WHAT WE SAID THEN:

"Each level has been excellently designed with deathmatching in mind, with plenty of wide-open spaces for frantic gibbing, sniper spots for picking players off, and even the occasional area for some good old-fashioned camping. When all is said and done, the dust has settled and the gibbs mopped up, Quake II: Arena is the ultimate firstperson shooter."

93% in PCPP #45

Tiger Woods 2000	84	#49
Traitor's Gate	78	#44
UEFA Manager	79	#51
Ultima Online	68	#48
Ultima IX: Ascension	70	#45
Unreal: Return to Na Pali	72	#41

TR: The Last Revelation

DEVELOPER: Core Design

PUBLISHER: Eidos Interactive

DISTRIBUTOR: Ozisoft

WHAT WE SAID THEN:

"Tomb Raider: The Last Revelation represents a welcome return to Tomb Raider's roots, offering innovative and exciting new features while retaining the basic gameplay elements that made the original Tomb Raider a resounding success."

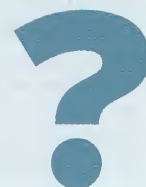
89% in PCPP #43

Unreal Tournament	94	#45
Urban Chaos	85	#46
Vampire: The Masquerade	82	#52
Wacky Races	32	#54
Wartorn	78	#53
Warlords Battlecry	62	#54
Wild Wild West	65	#51
World Manager	34	#48

SCORE LIST QUIZ!

WIN YOUR CHOICE OF THESE EIGHT FEATURED GAMES!

Something different this month. To enter the competition, we want you to tell us the common theme amongst the eight highlighted games. Send to the usual competitions address, marking your envelope to "Score List Quiz #55" and writing your answer on the back. Don't forget to tell us which game of the eight featured on these pages you would like to win. Winners notified in PCPP#57.



IN HINDSIGHT...

Diablo II



WE BATTLE PAST AN ARMY OF ORCS TO FIND OUT HOW BLIZZARD'S **BILL ROPER** FEELS TO SEE **DIABLO II** ON THE SHELVES

After a perpetually extended development process, it's appropriate that Blizzard's dungeon romp should prove to be one of the fastest selling games in history. In fact, *Diablo II*'s immense popularity has been its greatest undoing, as any visitor to the overheated Battle.net servers could verify. Its success should not come as a surprise. Blizzard took the standard sequel route, creating a game that would make veterans feel comfortable and still please those who missed out first time round. But how do they feel about the end result? Let's find out...

PCPP: How do you feel when you look at the final, boxed, retail version of *Diablo II*?

Bill Roper: Mostly pride for all the hard work that the development teams put into it - programming, art, sound/music/voice, cinematics, and QA - mixed with more than a little relief that after 3 years of work it is finally in the hands of the game-playing public. By the way, the box design is one of the best that Havas Interactive has ever turned out.

PCPP: Did the game's development schedule run more or less smoothly than you had anticipated at the start of the project?

BR: It went smoothly, given that Blizzard development staff members are used to "do-overs" and radical reworkings as a normal part of our painstaking process of game development.



It'd be handy to glow like that - like when the bulb goes in your bedside lamp while you're still reading

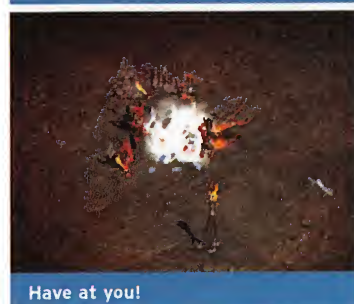
PCPP: What was the greatest challenge that the team faced along the way?

BR: The biggest challenge was to live up to the quality of the original *Diablo* game. We had to rewrite the whole *Diablo* gameplay engine to preserve the original's addictive nature - (if it ain't broke, don't fix it!) - while adding new features that truly improved upon the original - running, highlighting items on the

ground, the skill tree system, 3D accelerator support, streaming level data to avoid loading screens, etc... Another major challenge was working for an extended period of time (nearly 1 year!) in "crunch mode" - 60 to 80hr weeks.

PCPP: How much did the game change during development? Or how close to its original design document did it remain?

BR: It remained relatively close to the original design in general terms, but *Diablo II*'s design was not overly detailed. Blizzard North does a lot of design "on the fly" and passes down plenty of design decisions to the creative staff who are producing the game content. This is not really the fastest way to crank out a game, but it seems to produce games that have got more staying power as well as mass appeal.



PCPP: What would you have liked to have added but were unable to? And what were the reasons?

BR: We regrettably had to drop the hoped-for Guild system and Arena games from Diablo II. Implementing Guilds for such a large, complex game would have delayed completing the game beyond the point. Arena games would have been a diversion from proceeding directly to completing the game.

PCPP: Which one aspect of the game are you most proud of?

BR: We definitely delivered on our promise to prevent cheating and hacking on our Battle.net Realm client/server system.

PCPP: And which one aspect are you least happy with?

BR: Probably the fact that we had to stick with the relatively low resolution of the original Diablo, 640x480.

PCPP: How do you interpret the reception the game has met with - critically and commercially?



BR: Commercially, the reception has been better than we ever hoped, especially in Europe and Asia. Critically, it hasn't been as well-received, but we have made progress and will continue to work hard to solve the main complaints about sluggishness and instability on Battle.net Realms to ensure that players of Diablo II have the best play experience possible.

PCPP: What have you learned from Diablo II that you'll be taking into your next project?

BR: Don't make the game too big. :-)

PCPP: What can we expect to see down the track in terms of patches, expansions or sequels?

BR: The 1.04 patch will be coming soon - the expansion set with 2 new character classes and a whole new Act is projected for the first half of next year. Sequels? Maybe someday we can start thinking about that...

PCPP: What's next for Blizzard and yourself?

BR: After the Diablo II expansion, the next Blizzard game to ship will be Warcraft III, currently under development at the Blizzard headquarters office in Irvine. I'll take a break and kick around some new ideas for a little while before buckling down to work on what I hope will be another hit game for Blizzard.

PCPP: Thanks, Bill.

Second Take



The bad thing about Diablo II - and the basis of the disdain in the majority of disillusioned gamers out there - is its lack of challenge. Put simply, it gets boring far too quickly. Enemies are easily felled, and should you bite the big one - easy, just pick up where you left off. This (among other things) leads to lazy and uninspired gaming where gaps in mindless slaughter are filled in by "puzzles" most basic in nature. There is but one remedy for this:

PLAY DIABLO II IN HARDCORE MODE!

The premise is simple. One life. One death. Die, and your character - everything he or she has fought for, collected, and become - is permanently erased from the battle.net servers. It changes the way you play, the very nature of an encounter with hostile foes. In Hardcore mode, you're not just going through the motions - you're playing to survive. Victory is not assured. You have to work damn hard to earn it. Thanks to HC mode, Diablo II is a fantastic action RPG. Blizzard has done it yet again. But why isn't it accessible from the very onset of your adventure? Why-oh-why do you have to play through the game first in wuss-bag-ponce-boy/girl mode before you can access the sublime gameplay mode? It's a crime. The story and movies aren't as rewarding the second time through, and they're infinitely more satisfying when you've fought tooth and nail to get through. Blizzard has taken the only vestige of hope for the disillusioned Diablo fan and put it beyond easy reach. It's a decision that seems to clearly establish Blizzard's undying commitment to beginner gamers at the expense of the well-travelled ones. Shame on you Blizzard, shame.

March Stepnik



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NINTENDO 64

Tech

THE SILICON STATE OF THE ART



Another month, another look at the state of PC hardware tech - it's been a rather sluggish month, although the pre-Christmas rush should spice up the scene. With the large profits involved, Christmas is always the most exciting time for the computer industry. Deck the halls with Durons and GeForce cards, I say. On a side note, we are looking to greatly expand the Tech section in the coming months. With this in mind, we are after some capable technical writers to boost the ranks of the established team. Obviously a very strong understanding of current PC technology, an enthusiasm for computers and consumer electronics, and exceptional English skills are required. Anyone interested in such a position should send me application, including a brief sample review of a current piece of PC hardware. hughns@next.com.au

Mainboard Mania

DOUBLE DATA RATE MEMORY IS HERE WITH VIA FIRST OUT OF THE BLOCK

After much anticipation, DDR DRAM motherboards are finally hitting the market place. DDR DRAM (Double Data Rate Dynamic Random Access Memory) offers, generally, a 20% performance increase over similarly configured SDR DRAM systems. DDR DRAM alleviates system memory constraints, which has become one of the chief bottlenecks in modern computer systems. The basic idea behind DDR SDRAM is that you take a normal SDRAM module and redesign it to be able to send data on the rising and falling edge of each clock. Instead of running the SDRAM twice as fast, which is an exceedingly difficult task, you enable it to send data twice as fast, a less difficult task, thereby providing about twice the theoretical maximum memory bandwidth. Naturally, 3D games thrive using DDR DRAM.



So far, we've only been able to get our hands on an Asus A7M266 (using the AMD 761 and Via 686B chipset), but are very impressed by the performance and stability of this new platform.

VIA Apollo

VIA has released two DDR chipsets: the VIA Apollo Pro266 for Intel processors and VIA Apollo KT266 for AMD processors. Meanwhile, AMD have released the AMD760 chipset, which was the first chipset to hit the market. These chipsets support not only PC100/PC133 SDRAM but also PC1600 and PC2100 DDR SDRAM. Besides the conventional set of features, including ATA/100 support, these chipsets are also expected to support as yet unannounced CPUs. The KT266 with the 266MHz FSB, for instance, should support AMD CPUs based around the Mustang core. Particularly pleasing is the overall cost of DDR solutions. Both the DDR compliant motherboards and DDR memory modules are only marginally more expensive than their conventional

brethren. The cost of a PC2100 module is only 5% higher than that of PC133 SDRAM, as was initially planned, actually. DDR DRAM chips are built using a very similar method to SDR DRAM, keeping costs to an absolute minimum. This is in sharp contrast to RAMBUS memory, whose radical design departure has ensured the high cost of memory modules.

Interestingly

enough, the forthcoming AMD 760MP chipset comes with support for processors in SMP configuration. Up until now, no chipsets have been

available that support AMD chips in a dual configuration. To our relief, AMD have ensured us that all socketed Athlon and Duron (oh yes!) processors should work in a dual configuration. A motherboard with dual Athlon processors and DDR memory will be seriously quick.

Currently, Intel dominates the server market - the new 760MP chipset will allow AMD to compete with Intel in the highly profitable server and high-end workstation market. A definite contender for next month's beast.



AMD Developments

NEW ATHLON AND DURON SHIPPED

Once again, AMD have taken the performance crown from Intel, having released the 1.2Ghz Athlon. And, in contrast to the re-released Pentium III 1.13Ghz, the 1.2 Ghz Athlon is available in quantity over here in Australia. At the same time, AMD has also released the Duron at a very respectable 800Mhz. With these new releases, AMD have slashed the prices in their processor line-up. Finally, the highly-desirable 1Ghz variant is almost affordable.

In similar news, VIA have announced their mobile chipset solution for AMD processors. Hopefully, the first laptops using a low-power version of the Athlon/Duron CPU should be available shortly after Christmas. The high performance laptop market looks set to explode over the Yuletide season - some of the cool technologies we can expect over the next few months include the new Sony



Vaio using a Transmeta Crusoe at 600Mhz, as well as the mobile Ati Radeon video chipset and the much anticipated mobile Nvidia 3d accelerator. Quake3 on the train, anyone?



ONLINE

FREAKY WEB LINKS

www.geocities.com/tnaw_xtennis/G-Quadro/E-G-Quadro.htm
Instructions on how to convert your GeForce2/MX card into a high-end Quadro controller. Strictly for freaks

www.virtualhideout.net/guides/bios_logo_mods/index.shtml
How to modify your BIOS splash screen. Do at your own risk

www.hardocp.com/articles/raid/mr_boomys_raid.html
Change a Promise ATA/66 PCI card into a Promise RAID card

www.overclockers.com.au/techstuff/a_mpu/Home-Grown Case Modifications - rad

www.cs.cmu.edu/~reshko/PILOT/
The Palm Pilot Robot Kit - Develop a fully autonomous robot controlled by a Palm handheld computer

Timna Cancelled

LOW-COST CHIP NO MORE

Intel has given up development of the 'Timna' processor, a low-cost concept CPU designed specifically for Internet Appliances. In order to reduce costs, 'Timna' was planned to incorporate a PIII processor (128kb L2 cache), an i740 graphics core and a North Bridge onto a single die. Industry gossip suggests that Timna was another casualty in the ongoing RAMBUS debacle. Having bet Rambus as the memory of the future, Intel designed Timna with an RDRAM controller.

However, the market has snubbed Rambus memory in favour of cheaper SDRAM: even now the cost of RDRAM modules is incredibly high.

Apparently, Timna cannot be adapted to utilise an SDRAM interface. Intel's plans for the low-cost market remain with the stalwart i810e (integrated Sound and Video) and Celeron combo.



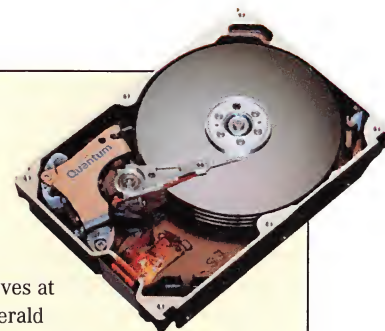
The mighty Celeron remains Intel's flagship chip for the low-cost market

Maxtor and Quantum

HARD DRIVE COMPANIES JOIN FORCES

Maxtor Corporation and Quantum Corporation announced a definitive agreement to combine Maxtor and Quantum HDD, Quantum's Hard Disk Drive Group, in a transaction that will create the world's leading disk drive company. To be named Maxtor Corporation, the combined company will have a ship rate of more than 50 million

hard drives annually. With hard disk drives at their cheapest ever, this merger could herald spectacularly low prices. This highly competitive market now remains the domain of Seagate, IBM, Maxtor Corp., Western Digital and Fujitsu.



Hotware Reviews

MICROSOFT

SIDEWINDER STRATEGIC COMMANDER

A dedicated realtime strategy controller

Distributor Microsoft

Price TBA

In a bid for the lucrative Christmas market, Microsoft has just launched a slew of cool new peripherals - last month we reviewed the innovative Microsoft Game Voice communication package and the excellent Precision 2 joystick. The latest offering, the Strategic Commander, is a totally novel concept. As the name suggests, the Strategic Commander is designed specifically for strategy games. However, it will work (albeit less effectively) as a decent FPS keyboard replacement.

The Strategic Commander is a pleasure to use. We tested it over a wide variety of games, including Ground Control, Dark Reign II, Myth II and Age of Empires II. Like the Claw, the Strategic Commander rests in your left



hand, and is used in conjunction with your mouse. It sits comfortably under your palm, and allows access to a wide variety of glowing, programmable buttons - in fact, there is a shift-combined total of 72 possible button combination presets. Gamers can group units, create buildings and rally forces with the touch of a button.

More importantly, however, the Strategic Commander allows for full axis control. In 2D strategy games, the palm-stick allows for easy scrolling across the terrain. And in 3D games, the 'twist' perspective control is invaluable for effective camera manipulation. A USB connection and the powerful software interface



provides a seamless gameplay experience. The software includes 30 pre-programmed profiles for use in the most popular strategy games - more custom profiles are downloadable from the Microsoft Sidewinder website. In addition, you can create and edit your own personally configured profile for ultimate control. The Strategic Commander confirms Microsoft's reputation for top-notch peripherals.

KODAK

DC3400 DIGITAL CAMERA

Professional photography made easy

Distributor Kodak Australia

Price \$999.95

As the popularity of digital cameras has increased, a number of manufacturers have lead the way with affordable, high-quality products. With its latest offering, Kodak has taken the concept of 'ease of use' to heart. Featuring a simplistic interface and an extremely intuitive, icon-based menu system, the DC3400 all but eliminates the complexities normally associated with digital photography. Its 2x optical/3x digital zoom capability and autofocus features make taking crisp, vibrant distance and close-up shots easy. Simplifying matters even further is the included USB cable that enables transmission of pictures from the camera to the PC in mere seconds.

The DC3400 includes an 8Mb Compact Flash card as standard. This equates to storage of approximately 96 colour, black and white or sepia images taken at the lowest image quality and resolution settings. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the 8Mb CF card is capable of storing 12 images captured at professional image quality and resolution settings.

Running on four AA batteries, the camera itself is constructed from sturdy, lightweight materials. The built-in flash enhances its already impressive low light performance, and the colour LCD screen permits fast and effective preview and review of images. For added stability, the

underside of the camera is fitted with a tripod mount, and the 10-second self-timer is excellent for group photos. Overall, the DC3400 is a fantastic point-and-shoot digicam best suited to those looking for a



digital camera capable of producing high quality images without any added complications.

Smile and say
"Cheese!" anyone...
Hang on, this is last
month's caption

INNO3D

TORNADO GEFORCE 2 MX

Great performance at a budget price

Distributor	Innovision	Price	\$299
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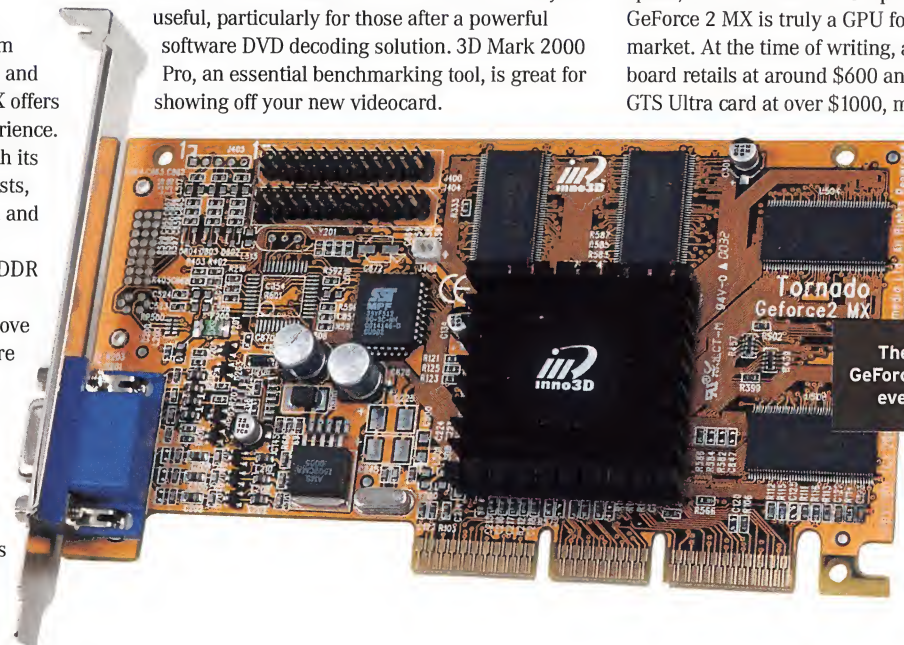
Using the GeForce 2 MX GPU, this little board packs a punch.

Incorporating all the features of the GeForce 2 GTS chipset - full transform and lighting, second-generation GPU and per-pixel shading - the GeForce 2 MX offers the full second generation GPU experience. The good, however, comes mixed with its share of bad. In order to minimise costs, the MX is sold at a lower clockspeed, and uses inferior memory than the GTS. While SDR memory is cheaper than DDR RAM, it has a large impact upon performance, especially when you move to higher resolutions and more texture detail. However, although the MX will get pummelled by a GTS card on a high end Athlon/Pentium III system, it does give the previous champ, the GeForce 256 DDR, a good run for its money.

The Tornado GeForce 2 MX comes bundled with full versions of WinDVD 2000, Rage Rally, Midnight

GT, Adobe Photo Deluxe Home Edition and MadOnion's 3D Mark 2000 Pro. WinDVD may be useful, particularly for those after a powerful software DVD decoding solution. 3D Mark 2000 Pro, an essential benchmarking tool, is great for showing off your new videocard.

With such a compelling mixture of heady speed, rich features and low price, the Tornado GeForce 2 MX is truly a GPU for the mass market. At the time of writing, a GeForce 2 GTS board retails at around \$600 and the GeForce 2 GTS Ultra card at over \$1000, making the budget-priced MX a clear winner for all but the most hardcore framerate devotees.



The power of the GeForce2 is now within everyone's reach

THRUSTMASTER

360 MODENA PRO RACING WHEEL

More functions than you can shake a gearstick at

Distributor	Guillemot	Price	\$149
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Thrustmaster's reign in the world of wheels came to an abrupt halt with the advent of digital steering technology. With the problems associated with the TM analogue wheels theft of CPU cycles from critical systems (ie. framerates), the new era that belongs to the digital devices was a welcome change.

Not like TM to sit brooding in defeat, they've hit back with the brand new 360 Modena Pro Racing Wheel. The Modena Pro is by far the most sophisticated weapon ever witnessed from the Thrustmaster arsenal.

On offer is a sturdy, fully rubber-textured wheel that, whilst not 100% ergonomic, will cater for almost any sized hand. Sporting the highest number of buttons ever seen on a wheel, the racing community can finally compete with the high - sometimes excessive - programmability of devices the flight sim community has been taking for granted for far too long.

On top of the three available axes (two on the wheel and one on the pedals), the 360

Modena Pro comes complete with a staggering eighteen programmable buttons, eight of which are incorporated into an 8-way POV hat. Gear-shifting levers can be found both behind the wheel and in stick shift form on the base of the unit. As per usual, all buttons and levers are pre-programmable via the extensive TM wheel software.

The unit sits securely on any size desk via Thrustmaster's traditional central clamping system complete with quick release levers. All drivers are easily installed and, as a final touch of class, the wheel is connected to the



PC via the increasingly popular USB medium, leaving that soundcard with all its processing power to do what it does best.

Michael Schumacher practises with one of these, so we hear

Hotware Reviews

FERRARO DESIGN

THE CLAW

Ditch that dirty old keyboard

Distributor Ferraro

Price TBA

Developed by Ferraro Design, a small Australian peripheral manufacturer clawing themselves to the top of the market, The Claw is designed as a keyboard replacement for firstperson games (FPS). Basically, The Claw is held in your left hand, giving you easy access to nine different programmable commands, whilst your right hand remains with the mouse. You can also assign up to five different keystrokes to each button, allowing for perfectly executed rocket jumps and other complex manoeuvres. And, unlike a traditional keyboard, the fully

ergonomic design means late-night fragfests won't bring about Clawpal-Tunnel syndrome. Which is just clawesome.

By eschewing a USB connection for a keyboard PS2 plug, The Claw will work under every operating system available. Even BeOS and Linux. It may look ridiculous, but The Claw is a surprisingly functional and robust solution. Although not entirely original (The Logitech Game Mouse is a similar concept), The Claw is an asset to any serious Quaker's arsenal. Worth putting on your Christmas list for Santa Claws.



You may have to rethink how you play FPSs, but it's worth it

SWANN

SPYCAM

One for the budding private detectives

Distributor Swann

Price \$159

This has zero relevance to PC gaming. Regardless, it's damn cool. Featured in countless spy-flicks, the SpyCam is a miniature video camera designed for hidden surveillance. Nevertheless, as much as the designer wants to mask its real purpose, there is only one real use for the SpyCam - voyeurism. The SpyCam is a perfect tool for extorting money from your siblings, spying on workmates and placing in department store changerooms. Feel free to send any 'home-videos' to seb@next.com.au!

The package includes the tiny camera - which can be powered by a 9V battery or a wall

socket - and a composite connector. The connector can be plugged directly into your TV (for realtime action), a PC with a TV-In jack (for encoding to DivX and distributing) or a VHS recorder. Alternatively, you can invest in the wireless transmitter box, which will transmit the image up to thirty metres away. The picture is surprisingly crisp. With an integrated microphone, the SpyCam could be an essential product. Meanwhile, this remains the domain of gizmo junkies and, well, you know who.



Send in your SpyCam footage for next month's coverdisc

THRUSTMASTER

TOP GUN FOX PRO 2

Perfect for space combat sims

Distributor Guillemot

Price \$79.95

When the words Thrustmaster and joystick are used in the same sentence, it usually evokes images of state of the art, fully realistic, HOTAS flight systems with programmable options encompassing over twenty function buttons, configurable up to a staggering 200 different combinations! However, in an attempt to cater for the less hardcore sim market, TM has seen fit to bestow the "Top Gun Fox Pro 2 Joystick" upon us.

Though the Fox Pro 2 system is in essence not a HOTAS, there is a full throttle option available as a secondary purchase, which will

give users a less sophisticated version of Thrustmaster's best-selling HOTAS system. The Fox Pro 2 features an eight-way hat, seven fire control buttons as well as four different axes, all of which are fully programmable. The unit is extremely easy to install, and comes complete with the obligatory drivers.

All of the buttons and axes are very slick and

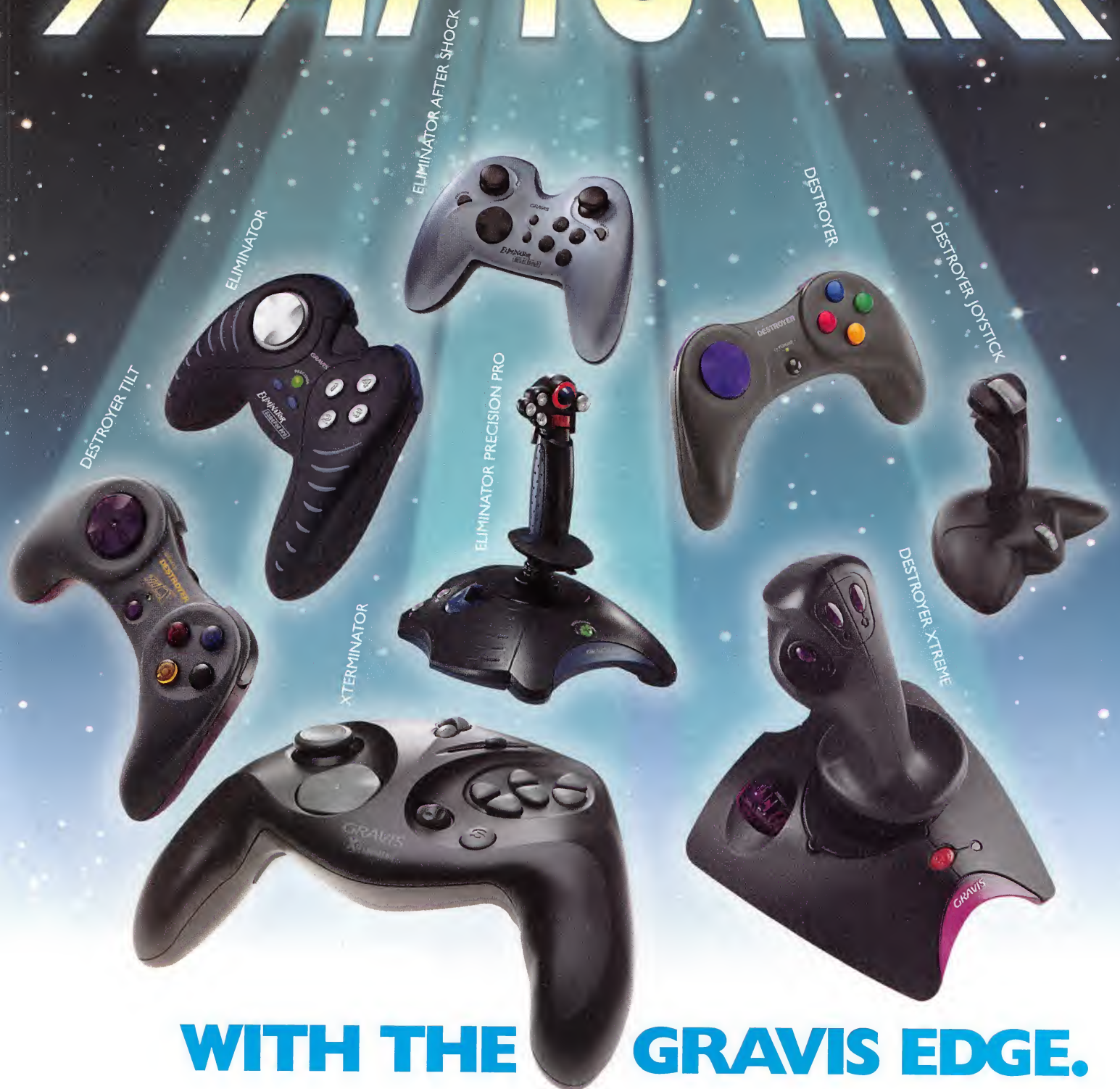
not sticky like some others, yet not too smooth so precision is sacrificed. As an added feature, at the base of the unit is an adjustable rotary that controls the tension in the stick movement.

For a cheap alternative to Thrustmaster's full combat systems, the Fox Pro 2 is the perfect compromise.



Silver makes for a refreshing change from the usual blacker than black joysticks

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We have something for every skill level, from kid-friendly game pads and joysticks
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Hotware Roundup



MONITORS

by Hugh Norton-Smith

While most hardware categories seem to blossom into new forms with every season, display technology has hardly changed over the years. Monitor tech may not change at the scorching pace of videocards and CPUs, but desktop screens have witnessed a number of improvements: large monitors that were once considered the domain of professionals are standard issue; advanced features such as digital controls, integrated USB hubs and flat screens are becoming commonplace; and extras such as BNC connectors are now familiar features.

Above all, prices keep dropping. 19" monitors are now sold at the same price point of 17" monitors last year, and 21" monitors are now available for the same price as older 19" displays.

Size Does Matter

When shopping for a monitor, you first need to consider the resolution you plan to work in.

Besides sharper image quality, higher resolutions translate into less scrolling and higher productivity. Generally speaking, the higher the resolution you want, the larger the monitor required. The most important consideration is diagonal width: buy the largest monitor your budget will allow for, as a decent monitor should last for several years. With prices plummeting, 19" and 21" monitors are becoming the norm with new system purchases - it horrifies me that anyone could purchase a kicking new system, and use it in conjunction with a 15" screen. For most gamers, a 19" monitor will offer the best trade-off between price and

performance. These beauties deftly balance the practicality of a large-screen monitor (all the monitors tested performed admirably at 1600x1200) with a price and physical size traditionally offered by smaller monitors. A 19" monitor offers roughly 25 percent more screen room than a 17" display, and often takes up the same space. And at prices ranging from about \$700 to \$1,400, the 19" monitors typically cost around \$600 less than their 21" siblings.

Sony CPD-G400

SIZE	19"
MAX RES	1880x1440@70Hz
MAX USABLE RES	1600x1200@85Hz
DOT PITCH (DIAGONAL)	.25mm
USB	No

Although designed for the corporate type, the Sony G400 is a near-perfect gaming monitor. It uses the same technology featured in the top-of-the line G500, including an absolutely

flat picture tube, FD Trinitron technology and a high contrast anti-reflective screen coating. It's considerably more expensive than the other 19" monitors available, but includes features normally found in 21" monitors - in particular, the maximum useable resolution of 1600x1200@85hz is a boon to hardcore Windows users. Finally, the ultra-short picture tube uses a modicum of desk real estate, making it perfect for LAN parties.



We have to stick screenshots on all monitors...



Sony CPD-G500

SIZE	21"
MAX RES	2048x1536@75Hz
MAX USABLE RES	2048x1536@75Hz
DOT PITCH (DIAGONAL)	.24mm
USB	No

The G500 is a monitor aimed squarely at the graphics or CAD professional, but who cares? The G500 is unquestionably the best games monitor on the market. With a maximum resolution of 2048x1536@75hz, the Sony G500 offers unbeatable performance. If you have a suitably beefy videocard, Quake 3 looks orgasmic at this resolution. And it has a price

tag to match: this monitor is NOT cheap. You could purchase a whole system (with monitor) for the cost of the G500. Nevertheless, if you've got the dosh and want the best monitor available, it's worth it. I use it in my own system. It's that good.

Viewsonic PS790

SIZE	19"
MAX RES	1600x1280@70Hz
MAX USABLE RES	1600x1200@78Hz
DOT PITCH (DIAGONAL)	.25mm
USB	No



offers very respectable image quality at standard Windows resolutions. It offers an excellent viewing experience for a very competitive price. Recommended for those after the full 21" experience without mortgaging their girlfriend.



...otherwise the blank screens look a bit crap...

disappointing. USB hubs and an established brand-name can't hide the monitors obvious deficiencies - for its price, the P815 has a disappointing maximum resolution of 1920x1440, a disconcertingly curved screen and a huge footprint. In sum, the P815 pales in comparison to the marginally more expensive Sony CPD-G500.

...though occasionally it's good not to have to worry about it (see bottom)

Samsung 900SL

SIZE	19"
MAX RES	1600x1200@75Hz
MAX USABLE RES	1600x1200@75Hz
DOT PITCH (DIAGONAL)	.26mm
USB	Optional



The Syncmaster 900SL (SL stands for short length), is Samsung's newest compact 19" model. For a 19" monitor a maximum resolution of 1600x1200@85hz is very impressive. It's not completely flat, but certainly not excessively curved. In addition, the inclusion of BNC connectors separates it from the rest of the 19" pack. It's easy to recommend the 900SL, regardless of whether cost, space-saving design or performance is the most important purchasing decision.

Samsung 1100 P+

SIZE	21"
MAX RES	1800x1440@75Hz
MAX USABLE RES	1800x1440@75Hz
DOT PITCH (DIAGONAL)	.25mm
USB	Optional

Maxing out at 1800x1440@75hz resolution, the Samsung 1100P+, which uses the Syncmaster Shadow Mask Tube, is clearly not the highest performing 21" monitor. Despite this, the Samsung



For some time now, Sony and Viewsonic have competed for the title of best monitor manufacturer. Viewsonic used to be considered the last word when it came to high performance (albeit pricey) monitors. The PS790 is their latest 19" offering, which in addition to some impressive specifications, manages to fit in the same space as most 15" monitors. The diminutive footprint makes the PS790 perfect for those with very little desk space. Sadly, the PS790 comes with what can only be termed as a 'fishbowl' screen. The picture quality and convergence may look superb, but next to the similarly priced Sony G400, the PS790 looks rather dated and ugly.

Viewsonic P815

SIZE	21"
MAX RES	1920x1440@75Hz
MAX USABLE RES	1920x1440@75Hz
DOT PITCH (DIAGONAL)	.25mm
USB	Yes

The P815 is Viewsonic's flagship 21" inch monitor. Intended for CAD/CAM and imaging professionals, the P815 works equally well as a gaming monitor. One innovation is the inclusion of a powered USB hub at the base of the monitor. It may sound gimmicky, but it proves surprisingly useful. Having easily accessible ports (rather than at the rear of the computer) is enormously useful when plugging in joysticks or any other USB peripheral. As with the PS790, I found the P815 ultimately



The Beast

AN ULTIMATE RIG BY HUGH NORTON-SMITH

The PC PowerPlay engineers are dedicated to helping our clients solve the most demanding, most crucial computing problems on the planet - designing the cars we drive, creating new materials and life-saving drugs, predicting severe weather and climate change, analysing complex data structures, safeguarding national security, and a host of other applications that benefit humanity by advancing the frontiers of science and engineering. Our range of Cyberdyne Beast9000 TPC (Thinking Personal Computers) include the most cutting edge computing equipment to give YOU the edge.

CPU: AMD Athlon 1.2GHz

At a staggering 1.2GHz, the AMD Athlon 'Thunderbird' is unbeatable. The AMD Athlon has the most advanced floating point unit, 256k of integrated full speed L2 cache and a 200MHz EV6 Front Side Bus. The new DDR DRAM compliant motherboards demonstrate the full potential of the Athlon.

Motherboard: Asus A7M266

Using the AMD 761 and VIA 686B chipset, the Asus A7M is the first Athlon motherboard with DDR DRAM support to reach the PCPP labs. Using DDR DRAM, our A7M266 consistently thrashes our KT133 A7V board using PC133 SDRAM. As with all Asus components, the A7M is a marvel of modern engineering - it comes with an AGP Pro slot, a whopping 4 DDR DRAM expansion slots, ATA/100 support and a host of overclocking features.

RAM: 256Mb PC2100 DDR DRAM

256Mb RAM should keep the Beast in check for some time. Excellent for those times when you need to run Photoshop, Deus Ex and Quake3 simultaneously! PC2100 is the fastest rated DDR DRAM.

SCSI Card: Adaptec AHA-2940U2W

Dual channel Ultra 2 Wide SCSI card from Adaptec. 'Nuff said.

Hard Drive: 4x Seagate Cheetah X15 18Gb

The fastest hard disk available, the X15 trounces all the competition. The SCSI X15 runs at a huge 15,000 rpm, and has a chunky 4Mb of cache. If you buy a couple of these, you can run them in a redundant RAID array...with a maximum storage of 18Gb, you'll need a couple to satisfy all your storage needs.

Optical Drive: Ricoh M9060A

With the M9060M, Ricoh have combined the functionality of a DVD-ROM and aCD-RW drive into one compact unit. The M9060 can read at 24x, write at 8x, rewrite at 4x and read DVD-ROM at 4x. Very impressive.

Videocard: Asus V7800 GeForce 2 GTS Ultra

The GeForce 2 GTS is the fastest graphics accelerator on the market - coupled with 64Mb of DDRAM and Asus' cool SmartDoctor utilities, the V7800 is the one to beat. We decided not to go with the Quadro based video card, as we tend to cater more to gamer's needs than the graphics

professional, although the Quadro with 64Mb DDR DRAM would be a great alternative if you're looking for much higher CAD application performance.

Soundcard: Creative SoundBlaster Live! Platinum

The SB Live! Platinum package includes the perennially popular SBLive! Card, as well as the Live Drive II Optical interface. It also comes bundled with a massive software package.

Speakers: Videologic Sirocco Crossfire

The Crossfire setup has it all: 4 speaker surround, a hefty bass bin and music fidelity that puts a Rotel system to shame. The perfect adjunct to the SB Live! Platinum.

Monitor: Sony G500 21" Trinitron

Able to pull off 2048x1536, this is bound to impress the mates, especially when used in conjunction with a capable videocard like the V7800. Big, flat and sexy. Best of all, it's a Sony.

Case: Supermicro SC750-A

The Supermicro 750 is a behemoth. It can hold up to 16 fans, equipped with an AMD approved 300W Sparkle power supply, and has wheels on the bottom! A quality case like this could conceivably outlast the rest of your components.

Networking: 3COM 3C905C-TX

3Com have a reputation for making the best networking cards. The PCI-based 3C905C is no exception, with the best drivers and support available.

MOTHERBOARDS BUILT FOR SPEED

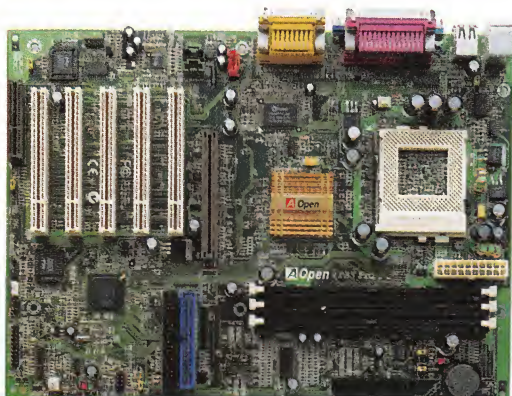
When we build a motherboard, you know it's going to have more than just plain guts.

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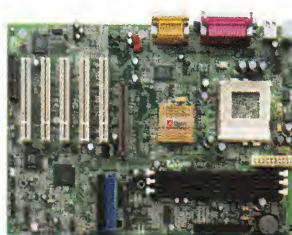
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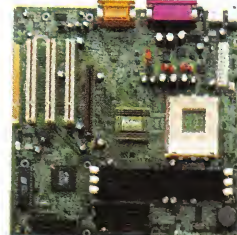
AX34 Pro - VIA 694X

Die Hard Bios with external switch • VIA 694X chipset
• Jumper-less design • Supports PC-133 RAM
• 4x AGP • Sound on-board



AX3S Pro - Intel 815E

Supports Intel Celeron and Pentium III Socket 370 CPU • Die Hard Bios with external controller • Supports PC133 SDRAM DIMM • Enlarged 24K gold plated heatsink for chipset • Integrated 2D/3D graphics engine with Dynamic Video Memory Technology: 4MB SDRAM display cache on board and one AGP slot for 4x/2x/1x AGP graphics card upgrade

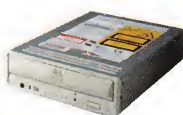


MK33 - Duron 2 Athlon

Supports AMD Athlon and Duron Socket A CPUs • Supports PC133 and VCM133 (virtual channel memory) DIMM • Supports 1x/2x/4x AGP mode • Resettable fuse providing short circuit protection for keyboard and USB device • ACPI S3 (suspend to RAM) and S4 (suspend to disk)



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M&ASER1006

SETUP

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS



DANIEL RUTTER WAXES TECHNICAL

WRITE TO

SETUP

PC PowerPlay
PO BOX 634
Strawberry Hills
NSW 2016

setup@pcpowerplay.com.au
When you write remember to include as much pertinent information as possible. Send your CONFIG.SYS and AUTOEXEC.BAT and any associated *.INI files for Windows that might tell me more about your problem. Give me as detailed an explanation as you can and be sure to include as much detail as possible about your PC. Feel free to email your questions or, if you want to snail mail, please remember to write clearly or better still print your letters. Please note that due to the volume of messages we receive, we cannot guarantee a response to all of your queries.

P-I vs P-II...

Q> What are the differences between a Pentium 233 and a Pentium II 233? Same core speed but I am guessing FSB or something different perhaps?

Because I always look at the Need part in the reviews and it says PII-233, and I only have a Pentium 200 overlocked to 233 (Ohhh man that's slow!) with a mere 48Mb of RAM by the way (face goes down in shame) and I HAD a Voodoo 1 which I have sold in anticipation for a second hand Voodoo Banshee which I am not sure I am getting now so I have had no 3D acceleration for about two months!

So back to the question - will I be able to run that game on a P233 MMX as well as I could with a PII-233? What if I had more RAM to compensate? I know its pathetic already! Oh how I'd kill for the Beast!

Nick Rulz

A> The Pentium used the Intel P5 core; the Pentium II used the more sophisticated P6 core. The P6 started life in the Pentium Pro and survives today, in heavily modified form, in the Pentium III line. The 233MHz Pentium and P-II both run from a 66MHz Front Side Bus (FSB), with a 3.5X multiplier.

At a given clock speed, a Pentium II is generally about 20 to 30% faster than the Pentium MMX. That doesn't mean the whole P-II COMPUTER is that much faster, of course; only if the CPU's the limiting factor will you see the full benefit.

The chief advantage of the P-II design wasn't that it was faster at a given clock speed than the Pentium, but that it could be made to run at HIGHER clock speeds. The 233MHz model was the slowest P-II ever made, and 233MHz was as fast as Pentiums ever got.

Similarly, a 450MHz P-III isn't much faster than a 450MHz P-II - but Intel never made a P-II faster than 450, or a P-III slower than 450.

Your CPU ain't too fast, but you could scrape along with it if you had a 3D accelerated graphics card, to take

some of the rendering load off the processor in 3D games. Without one, you do indeed own a pretty uninspiring game machine.

Not that meeting the minimum specifications on the side of the game box means you're going to be able to run the game well, anyway. Game "recommended system" specs generally seem to be made up by the marketing people. I think the procedure involved is:

1) Ask programmers what system's needed to run the game's installation program. They'll talk for a while; ignore everything after the word "but".

2) Take the system specs they've provided, halve the amount of RAM, print the result on the box.

3) Try to ignore the fact that you don't cast a shadow any more.

I just grabbed my old Homeworld box off the shelf; its "minimum" system requirement is a P-II 233 with 32Mb RAM and pretty much any old graphics card. Squint, and turn the volume right up to cover the sound of the frantically flogging hard drive, and drink half a bottle of Scotch, and you'll quite enjoy Homeworld on such a machine.

At least Sierra had the honesty to include a "Preferred" system as well - P-II 350 or higher with 64Mb and a proper video card.

[NOTE: The editorial staff of PC PowerPlay do not advocate the drinking of half a bottle of Scotch by any under-age readers. We believe it's traditional in these circumstances to just have a sip out of every bottle in the liquor cabinet, so your parents won't know. As long as they don't find the vomit. This has been a public service announcement.]

Universal mouse translator?

Q> I'm thinking of buying a Microsoft IntelliMouse Optical, however, I am facing the problem that I only have a serial port on my system. I know the optical mouse uses USB or PS/2

interface, so I bought a Serial to PS/2 adaptor and tried it out with my friend's PS/2 Logitech mouse, but the mouse won't move.

So I wonder - can I use the optical mouse on my system with that adaptor, or do I have to get a Serial to USB port adaptor, and how much does it cost?

Arthur

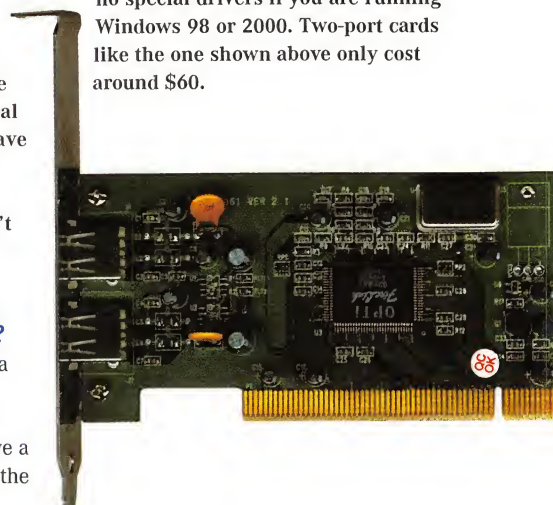
A> Mouses like the IntelliMouse Optical that work with both USB and PS/2, and the older model mouses that work with both serial and PS/2, have circuitry inside to deal with both interfaces.

Their adaptor plugs are just pin converters, probably with a shorted pin or something to tell the mouse it's now meant to be PS/2 instead of USB, or serial instead of PS/2.

That's why the adaptor you borrowed didn't work for you; the mouse you used it with doesn't know how to do anything but PS/2.

If you want a serial to USB adaptor, that's a shame. Such things do not, and cannot, exist. USB to serial, yes. Serial to USB, no.

You CAN, however, get a PCI USB card. It will give you a two or four USB ports, that will work automatically with no special drivers if you are running Windows 98 or 2000. Two-port cards like the one shown above only cost around \$60.



LETTER OF THE MONTH

Double trouble

Q> PC PowerPlay recently recommended dual Pentium III 933 CPUs for the "Ultimate Gaming Beast". Presumably this will soon change to dual Athlon 1GHz. What I really want to know is what is the advantage of having dual CPU's? More is better, but why?

I've heard that having dual processors is only useful for running a server or serious multi-tasking of graphic intensive applications. All I want to do is play one game at a time. Also, most of the time I just play single-computer / single-player games (ie not multi-player Internet or LAN games).

Paul

A> Generally speaking, if you want to play games, dual CPUs are a complete waste of money. Quad CPUs, as seen in high-end Intel-based servers, are just as useless.

For multi-CPU PCs to be any use, you need something to run on each CPU. You can't just split up one processing task onto both CPUs, any more than you can assign mixing the ingredients to one cook and baking the cake to another and expect the job to be done sooner.

Now, lots of computers have multiple tasks running simultaneously. Or as simultaneously as they can, anyway. All single processor systems are actually capable of working on only one job at a time, but they assign slices of CPU time to the various different tasks that are running. The time-slicing happens so fast that, as far as the user's concerned, the tasks really are running simultaneously.

If a computer's got two CPUs, then it genuinely can work on two things at once. The two CPUs will fight over resources - RAM and disk storage, for instance - and there's overhead caused by inter-CPU communication, too, so it's impossible to ever get the full two-times speed increase you might expect, for any real world task. But there will still be plenty of times when you'll see a great big performance improvement.

But.

Multiprocessing is something that has to be supported by a computer's operating system. Many older operating systems, and current OSes that aren't expected to be running on multiprocessor hardware, don't know what to do with more than one processor, full stop.

Windows 95, 98 and ME, for instance, are single processor only. They'll run just fine on multiprocessor hardware, but only one CPU will ever do anything. The computer will perform exactly the same whether the second CPU's installed on the motherboard or sitting in a drawer.

Linux, Windows NT and Windows 2000, on the other hand, are fine examples of multiprocessor-aware operating systems. They can hand arbitrary jobs to arbitrary CPUs. Any task - a game, a business app, or an internal operating system task - can be done by any CPU in the system. So you can be rendering a 3D animation, fire up a game, and have both tasks proceed at full single-processor speed.

On an OS like this, nothing special has to be done by programmers. Run a given application on a Windows NT multiprocessor system and it can be executed by whatever processor has the least to do. Or manually tied to one particular processor, for that matter.

Applications that are running on multiprocessing-capable operating systems can do their own internal multi-CPU tricks, too, by running different tasks in different "threads". These "multithreaded" applications, like Photoshop for instance, can get a lot of extra speed in tasks like fancy filter operations where half of a big job - the top half of the picture, say - can be assigned to one CPU, with the other half going to the other processor.

Games aren't generally very good candidates for multithreading. Quake 3 can make use of dual CPUs, but it only gets about as much more speed



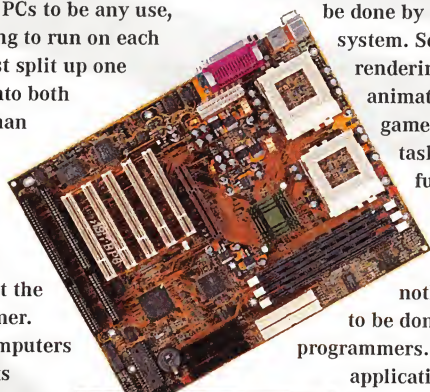
LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS A SPLENDIFEROUS SIDEWINDER GAMEVOICE ONLINE COMMUNICATION PERIPHERAL, COURTESY OF THE NICE PEOPLE AT MICROSOFT. HURRAH FOR THAT!

as it'd get if you used one CPU that was 1.3 times faster. Various other kinds of games might be able to reap greater benefits, but to my knowledge no other developers worry about multithreading, because they know that practically none of their market has a multiprocessor computer.

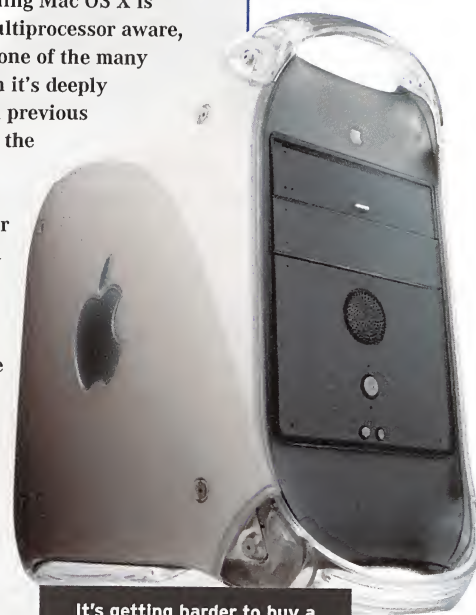
Mac OS, in case you're wondering, is a special case. It's not, itself, multiprocessor aware; Mac OS up to and including version 9 will never hand off any of its own internal tasks to anything but the first CPU. But it includes multiprocessing capabilities for appropriately written applications.

Mac apps, in other words, can be multithreaded and can run on both CPUs in the new dual-CPU G4s. But the OS can't put a task on the second CPU unless the program in question was written to work that way.

The upcoming Mac OS X is inherently multiprocessor aware, which is just one of the many ways in which it's deeply different from previous versions. And the reasonable number of multiprocessor Macs that will be around by the time Mac OS X's ready for prime time might result in some multithreaded Mac games coming out. Who knows. But I definitely wouldn't hold my breath.



Abit's classic dual-Celeron BP6 motherboard brought multiprocessing to the masses!



It's getting harder to buy a Power Mac G4 that DOESN'T have dual processors!

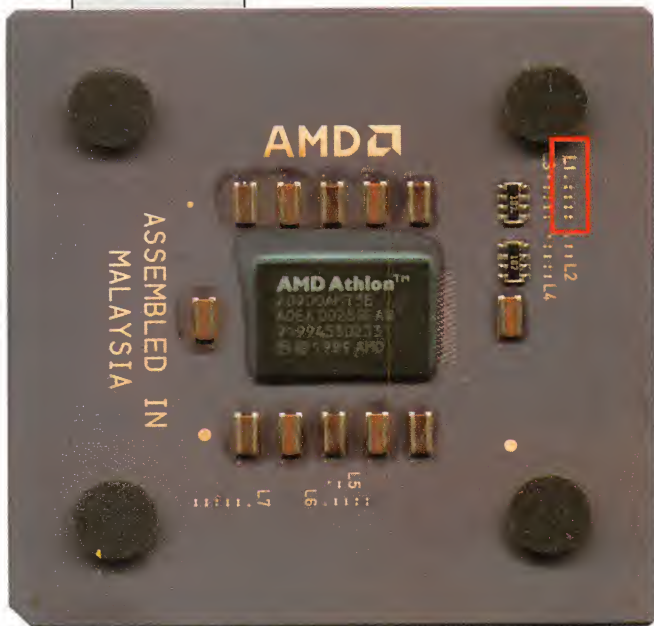
TECH TIPS

CPU scribbling!

Got a Socket A motherboard with CPU multiplier adjustment? Cool! Let's overclock! But no! You've got a locked-multiplier Socket A CPU!

<ahnie>No problemo.</ahnie>

All locked Socket A's so far are locked in a simple way, and you can unlock them easily. You just have to re-join some little bridges that've been cut. They're only about 0.6mm long, but they're easy enough to see if you know where to look. The red box marks the bridges. They are the ones that are labelled "L1".



Grab a pencil. Soft-ish lead (2B, say) and draw a line over each of the little bridges. There should be four distinct lines, like this; they shouldn't touch. If you get it wrong, just erase the marks and try again.



Pencil graphite is conductive enough to make the CPU behave like one with un-cut L2 bridges; multiplier-changing overclocking joy is yours. My Duron 600 does 900MHz all day!

HP hacking

Q> My friend (Yes, really, my friend, not "my friend," who is actually me, heh) has an HP 8140 that chugs along at 200MHz and has 96Mb of RAM. He wants to go faster, but he doesn't want and cannot afford to replace the whole machine. Plus, if he replaces the machine, his mother might get mad, since she hasn't finished paying it off. So he'd like to switch motherboards.

It's got an ASUS TX97-XV motherboard. I found a specs page for the board, and I'm a complete novice in this area, but I guess it says there that the fastest this will ever go is 233MHz, but my pal's looking for at least 500.

It doesn't have to be blazing superfast, but 500MHz and 128Mb of RAM would be very nice. So, my questions are, how hard might it be to toss in another motherboard and processor? Is it a worthwhile venture? And which products would you suggest?



A> Asus actually have a page for this motherboard: <http://www.asus.com.tw/products/motherboard/pentium/tx97-xv/index.html>. Some of the more

Bob

recent unusual boards they've made for HP aren't documented on their site, but this older one is.

Downloadable manual and everything.

Apparently, you can set the CPU Front Side Bus (FSB) speed to 75MHz on this board (see <http://www.asus.com.tw/products/motherboard/pentium/430txqa/txqa.html#busclkjmp> for the settings you need), which means you should be able to run an AMD K6-2 450 at 75MHz FSB, with a 6X multiplier, at 2.2 volts. To set that multiplier, just set multiplier jumpers to the 2X setting, which the K6-2 should read as 6X.

I've not actually done this on this board, though; I'm just going from Usenet posts. But that CPU'd give you a very worthwhile speed boost, and costs little more than \$100. Nothing more to buy, and the minor FSB overclock (66 to 75 ain't much) shouldn't bother any other components.

In the unlikely event that it DOES, the same multiplier and the standard 66MHz FSB speed will still give you a 400MHz processor for your money.

Failing that, you should have no great trouble swapping the board for any other ATX form factor motherboard. It's not an oddball proprietary shape, or anything.

Since the TX97-XV only supports 64Mb of SIMM RAM in its four slots, I presume your friend's using the more modern SDRAM DIMM modules, which you can drop straight into a newer motherboard IF the modules are rated for a fast enough bus speed. If they're PC100 rated, you will be OK with any CPU except Intel's 133MHz FSB Pentium III's; you need PC133 RAM for that.

If they are old PC66 modules (which they may well be), then you'll only be able to use a 66MHz FSB CPU, which these days means a Celeron.

Duron dilemma

Q> Should I buy an AMD Duron?
1) How much is it compared to a Celeron 2?
2) How good is performance compared to Celeron 2, P-III?
3) Are there ANY compatibility issues with the Duron?
4) Is 3DNow! better than MMX or SSE?
5) Is 700MHz good for a Voodoo 5 card?
6) At what processor speed point will the voodoo 3 2000 stop getting faster?

Scott Graham



A> If you're going to buy a new motherboard anyway, then a Duron and a Socket A motherboard is an excellent combination. If you have got an Intel-CPU motherboard and don't want to replace it, though, the AMD option's less exciting.

1) Durons are cheap. Maybe \$185 for a 600MHz one with a decent CPU cooler included, as I write this. A retail boxed Celeron 600 costs about \$240. There's no such thing, officially, as a "Celeron 2", by the way, although it's in common use to describe the new Flip Chip Pin Grid Array (FC-PGA) Celerons, which look like Coppermine Pentium III's.

Celerons up to 500MHz is Pentium II based; every one from 566 upwards is based on the cut-down Coppermine, and this core's officially called the "Coppermine 128". There are two kinds of 533MHz Celeron; the plain 533 is the old model, the 533A is the Coppermine 128.

2) Durons are faster than Celerons at the same clock speed. A 600MHz Duron will beat a 600MHz Celeron by between 10% and 20% for many tasks, and as much as 30% now and then. Durons run about as fast as an original model (pre-"Thunderbird") Athlon at a given clock speed, which means they also run as fast as a similarly clocked P-III.

3) Both Athlons and Durons are immaculately Intel-compatible. Some of the earlier Athlon motherboards had some personality disorders, but then again so do some Intel boards. The CPUs themselves seem perfect.

4) They're all, for practical intents and purposes, meaningless buzzwords. The extra instruction sets for "multimedia" that various recent processors use can, indeed, deliver substantial speed increases when software (video drivers, for instance) makes use of them. But it's really just one fancy CPU feature among many; the marketing people just find the extended instruction sets easier to sell.

5 and 6) The performance of different video cards scales differently with CPU speed increases. It depends on the game, and the resolution and colour depth you're using.

If your CPU is fast enough to calculate the geometry for a scene faster than the video card can render it, then there's no point making the CPU faster. Likewise, if the video card's scratching itself and waiting for the CPU to provide it with geometry so it can get on with drawing the next frame, then a video card upgrade isn't going to make any difference.

Increase the geometric complexity and you increase the CPU load; increase the resolution and colour depth and you increase the video card load.

To find out what the limiting factor is for a given computer and game, just play with the resolution while testing frame rates. If your frame rate falls as the resolution rises, then you have hit the video card's limits. If frame rate stays much the same, then as you wind up the resolution, the video card's waiting for the CPU.

100% AUSTRALIAN

PC active

12 HOT
GADGETS
PAGE 134

POWER DESKTOPS

The new value generation

6 LINUX FLAVOURS

Which one's right for you?



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02

DECEMBER ISSUE ON SALE NOW!

CD POWERPLAY #55



Starting CD PowerPlay

Welcome to the latest CD PowerPlay. As you can see we've slightly changed the interface to fit more writing on the screen and make it look a touch more professional. Consider it a minor facelift, or a change of scenery, just as long as the bosses are happy. Over time we'll slowly tweak it to include more of what you need. If you have any suggestions, abuse or maybe find a bug or two just let us know. (Letter bombs will not be accepted).

cdtech@powerplay.next.com.au

Faulty CDs will be replaced free of charge. Send it, together with a description of the error, to:

PC PowerPlay CD Returns

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DIRT TRACK RACING AUSTRALIA

From the fender-bending, dog-eat-dog world of stock, to the supped-up production stock racing machines and fast-as-lightening, loud-as-thunder late model series, this is racing on the edge. The Dirt Track Racing demo is our spotlight for this month. Get your car in gear, or get off the track.

The default keys for control are

Left, Right - Steer

Up - Accelerate

Down - Brake

Space - Change camera view

Left shift - Half lock steering

Equals - Move wing forwards

Minus - Move wing backwards

Left square bracket - Look left

Right square bracket - Look right

SPOTLIGHT

ESCAPE FROM MONKEY ISLAND

Shiver me timbers and poke me other eye out! This month's spotlight is Escape From Monkey Island, the fourth piratey adventure from the swashbucklers at LucasArts. The adventure series returns in 3D with Fresh Jokes, Rotten Puns, the Ultimate Insult and More Monkeys Than Ever

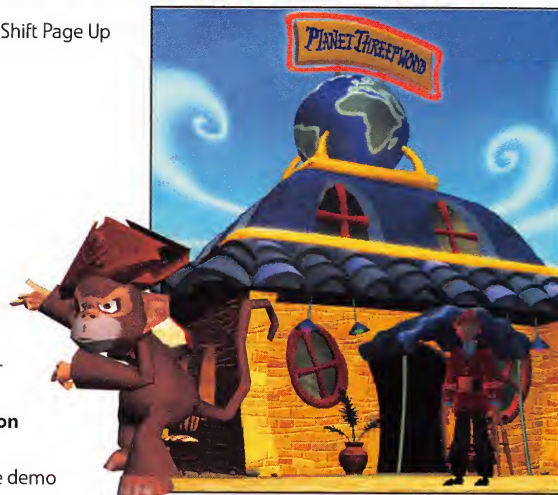
KEYBOARD COMMANDS

Move Left - Left Arrow
Move Right - Right Arrow
Move Forward - Up Arrow
Move Backwards - Down Arrow
Run - Shift
Default Action - Enter
Cycle Sentence Line/Hot Object or Dialog Choice - Page Up/Down or Alt Up Arrow or Alt Down Arrow

Page up/Page down dialog choice - Shift Page Up or Shift Page Down
Look at - E or L or 5
Use, Talk To - U
Skip Dialog Line - Delete or > key
Pick Up - P or +
Enter Inventory - I or Insert
Menu - F1

In Inventory

Cycle inventory left/right - Left Right arrows
Select inventory item - P or Enter or +
Exit inventory - Esc key
Select combine item (press u again on another item to combine) - U
Note - there is no mouse support in the demo



DEMOS

CULTURES

CATEGORY: Strategy

DEVELOPER: THQ

NEED: P2-266, 32MB, SVGA, 3D Card

The player must manage resources effectively, trade prosperously and advance cautiously across this wild, unruly terrain. A thriving economy and powerful military will only achieve so much. Success hinges on the player's ability to balance their wider strategic aims with the needs of individual members of the tribe. Each and every one of the game's characters is important to the growth and welfare of their kin - for each and every one of them has their very own mind and unique talents!

KEYS

All mouse driven

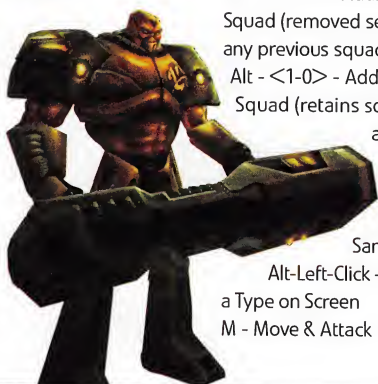
DARK REIGN 2 SINGLE PLAYER

CATEGORY: Strategy

DEVELOPER: Activision

NEED: P2-300, 32MB, SVGA, 3D Card

In Dark Reign 2's apocalyptic future, an ecologically unstable Earth has fallen under the rule of a repressive world police force, the Jovian Detention Authority. Charged by Earth's elite with protecting their exclusive



'dome' cities, the JDA is locked in an ongoing battle to pacify the masses of urban 'Sprawlers' who dwell in the toxic, irradiated world outside. The time has come now for the Sprawlers to unite their unconventional technologies and weaponry to engage the JDA in the violent drama of Earth's final chapter.

CONTROLS GENERAL

O - Open/Close Objectives Window
Shift-O - Display Orders Menu
Ctrl - Cue Any Order
Tab - Toggles Trails menu
Backspace - Delete Last Trails
Delete - Delete Selected Trail
Ctrl-S - Quick Save Mission
Ctrl-L - Quick Load Mission
Pause - Pause Game
Scroll Lock - Frame Advance When Paused
Print Screen - Create a Screenshot
Space - Jump to Location of Last Warning Message
Ctrl-Space - Message Return
Enter - Activate Client Chat

UNIT

Ctrl - <1-0> - Adds Selected Units to Squad (removed selected units from any previous squad)
Alt - <1-0> - Adds Selected Units to Squad (retains squad you are adding units to)
1-0 - Select Squads
Ctrl-Left-Click - Selects All Units of Same Type
Alt-Left-Click - Selects All Units of a Type on Screen
M - Move & Attack

Shift-M - Move
A - Attack
Shift-A - Attack Without Moving
S - Stop
T - Turn
Shift-D - Self-Destruct
G - Guard
[] - Select Next/Previous Unit and Jump to Location
Alt-[] - Select Next/Previous Unit of a Type and Jump to Location
J - Jumpscroll (click to trigger)
U - Upgrade
W - Restore

SQUAD MANAGER

<1-0> - Selects Squad
Shift-<1-0> - Jump to Squad
Left-Click # - Jump to Squad
V - Select Unit Move to Wedge formation
B - Selected Units Move to Box formation
N - Selected Units move to Line formation
X - Selected Units Scatter

BUILDING MENU

Left-Click - Build/Add Unit to Production Queue
Shift-Left-Click - Add Five Units to Queue
Right-Click - Remove One Unit from Queue
Shift-Right-Click - Remove All Units from Queue and Cancel Construction
P - Pause/Unpause Building Construction
R - Set Building Rally Point
> - Rotate Building Cursor Clockwise
< - Rotate Building Cursor Counter-Clockwise
H - Jump to Command Center

CAMERA

Arrow keys - Scroll Camera/Map
F - Camera Freelook (hold)

F1-F6 - Change Camera Presets
Numpad arrows - Change Camera Facing
Num5 - Face North at Default Camera Height

SERVER CD1

NORTON ANTIVIRUS

Norton AntiVirus 2001 automatically keeps virus definitions updated to provide continuous Internet and email protection. Norton AntiVirus 2001 combines virus detection capabilities with updating and scanning technologies to make it easy for users to secure their systems against malicious code. Norton AntiVirus 2001 guards against malicious code in ActiveX controls and Java applets as well as worms, Trojan Horses, and password-stealers.

NORTON UTILITIES 2001

Norton Utilities 2001 provides comprehensive tools for optimizing, maintaining, and repairing your Windows system. Some of the tools include. Speed Disk (defragments and reorganizes files on your hard disk), WinDoctor (to diagnose and fix software/hardware problems), Speed Start (speeds the start-up time of any program), System Doctor (automatically detects disk errors) and more.

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DEMOS CONTINUED

Num7/Num9 - Rotate Camera 90°
Right Mouse (Hold) - Scroll
+ Left Control - Pivot
+ Left Alt - Rotate
+ Left Control & Left Alt - Swoop/Zoom
Mousewheel - Swoop

DEEP FIGHTER

CATEGORY: Adventure
DEVELOPER: UbiSoft
NEED: P166, 32MB, SVGA, 3D Card
Deep below the ocean an underwater civilization is fighting to survive the dual threat of deadly enemies and the impending destruction of their landscape. As a private in the Defence Force you take on dangerous missions. Meanwhile droids and drones, under your direction, scuttle around busily maintaining and repairing the slowly crumbling city. Your ultimate objective? The construction of a giant mothership, that will transport your civilization safely away from these hostile waters.

CONTROLS

Forward Thrust - Cursor up
Backward Thrust - Cursor down
Left Strafe - Cursor left
Right Strafe - Cursor right
Yaw - Mouse X-axis
Pitch - Mouse Y-axis
Strafe up - Right Shift
Strafe down - Right Ctrl
Fire current weapon - Left mouse button
Activate current tool - Right mouse button
Cycle through available weapons - keypad +
Cycle through available tools - keypad -
Enter/leave map mode - Tab
Toggle HUD/message history - F5
Pause game - Esc
F1 - Bring up information screen

HITMAN

CATEGORY: Action
DEVELOPER: Eidos Interactive
NEED: P2-266, 64MB, SVGA, 3D Card
As the enigmatic Hitman, you must use stealth and tactical problem solving to enter, execute and exit your assignment with minimum attention and maximum effectiveness. For a price, you have access to the most devious devices, but how you use them will determine if you retire as a millionaire or get permanently retired. Remember, the world of contract hits rewards a quick intellect more than a quick trigger finger.



CONTROLS

The controls for Hitman - Codename 47 may be configured any way you like. In the default configuration you mainly use the numeric keypad and the mouse, like so:

➤ switch cam mode /
drop selected weapon/item *
binoculars -
look around left corner 7
run forward 8
look around right corner 9
sneak mode +
turn left 4
walk forward 5
turn right 6
sidestep (strafe) left 1
walk backwards 2
sidestep (strafe) right 3
action t
empty hands ins
reload weapon home
previous item/zoom in pgup
next item/zoom out pgdn
weapon fire mode (single/3/auto)
end, del
m map
esc option screen
f1 laptop
f2 mission status

MOUSE

left button fire/use
right button context menu / drop
body / exit binocular&sniper
scroll wheel next/prev item /
zoom in/out

IN COLD BLOOD

CATEGORY: Adventure
DEVELOPER: UbiSoft
NEED: P2-233, 32MB, SVGA, 3D Card
In Cold Blood is a espionage action/thriller in the tradition of Bond movies and Metal Gear Solid. Two men. One is an experienced government agent. An expert in espionage, a trained killer, a registered lethal weapon with a license to kill. The other is

an enigma, a man on the edge of sanity. Bound, caught, and cut off from reality. Both men might be John Cord, betrayed and abandoned, he can't remember the truth. He's searching his memory for clues. Two identities. Hmmm. Infinite possibilities. No certainties.

SYDNEY 2000

CATEGORY: Sports
DEVELOPER: Eidos
NEED: P266, 64MB, SVGA, 3D Card
Sydney 2000 is a graphical showcase bringing every aspect of the Olympic Games to video games players around the world. No detail has been spared to produce the most realistic sports game ever, whilst retaining a great feeling of fun and frantic multi-player competition.

CRIMSON SKIES

CATEGORY: Flight Sim
DEVELOPER: Microsoft
NEED: P2-233, 32MB, SVGA, 3D Card
Enjoy an all-new experience in flight combat! Crimson Skies puts you in the cockpit for thrilling dogfights and aerial adventure. In this alternate history, the year is 1937 and the United States is fractured into squabbling nation-states, brought about by the weight of the Great Depression, regional



prohibition and mounting isolationism. Giant Zeppelins crisscross the skies carrying both passengers and cargo, and airborne bandits are a constant threat.

GIFT

CATEGORY: Action Adventure
DEVELOPER: Cryo Interactive
Need: P200, 64MB, SVGA, 3D Card
Set in eight different worlds, each accompanied with unique and visually stunning graphic environments, GIFT is a challenging and controversial tour de force that satirises computer game characters and films. As players gradually familiarise themselves with subtle background details, they will inevitably discover traces of Lara Croft's round sunglasses as well as her shorts, Rayman's distinctive gloves, Darth Vader's light-sabre, the Matrix mobile phone, Quake's machine gun and combat uniform, and Mario's dungarees.

GUNLOK

CATEGORY: Action/Strategy
DEVELOPER: Interplay
NEED: P300, 64MB, SVGA, 3D Card
You play Gunlok, a lone member of the Advanced Special Forces Group. The machines have won, but humans continue to strive against them. After a period of training and contemplation you are now in

absolute control of your battle armour and Earth Powers. During the game Gunlok picks up companions and together, through team co-operation and using each other's unique abilities, they manage to battle their way to a final confrontation with the evil at the heart of The Corporation.

GAMEPLAY CD1

MODS

Arg!
Classic Quake Arena
Chaos UT
RTS Quake
Kingpin Skins/Addons
Fight Sim 2000 Pro Patch

GAMESPY ARCADE BETA

GameSpy Arcade matches people with each other and the PC games they want to play. It supports everything from the hardcore action classics — like Quake or Half-Life — to classic, board, sports, or strategy games. Whatever you want to play, GameSpy Arcade helps you find the games, find your friends and get things started.

TECH CD1

DOWNLOAD ACCELERATOR

Download Accelerator is a file download accelerator/manager that can increase download speeds by up to 300 percent. It has multiserver connections for the best performance. Download Accelerator can also recover from lost connections, computer shutdowns, and other such errors. The program even searches for mirror sites to maximize your download performance.

ICQ 2000B

ICQ 2000b is the latest release of ICQ ("I seek you"), the popular instant-messaging program that lets you communicate with friends and colleagues in real time. To seek out a friend on the ICQ network, simply enter his or her ICQ number, name, nickname, or email address. Once your contact list is set up, you'll be notified when your friends are online so that you can chat; send instant messages, files, and URLs; play games; or just hang out.

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throughs', you'll find out about all the secrets in the games, and you'll know



where all the weird

stuff happens.

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In short, there's

enough material in every issue to allow you to live your

gaming lifestyle to the fullest. Live your life the way you

want, with **PC GAMEGUIDE** at your side.



HALF-LIFE COUNTERSTRIKE 7.1B

CATEGORY: Action Mod
DEVELOPER: Counter-Strike DevTeam
NEED: P266, 64MB, SVGA, 3D Card
 Counter-Strike is a modification for Half-Life. It modifies the multiplayer aspects to allow more team-oriented gameplay. Like Team Fortress2, in Counter-Strike the player experiences what a trained counter terrorist unit or terrorist unit experiences. One team plays the role of the terrorist unit and the other team plays the role of the anti-terrorist unit. Each side has access to different guns and equipment, and different abilities. Maps will have different goals, such as hostage rescue, assassination, kill the entire opposing force, and more.



CONTROLS

Forward - Up Arrow
 Backward - Down Arrow
 Step left - ,
 Step right - .
 Turn left - Left Arrow
 Turn right - Right Arrow
 Sidestep - Left Alt
 Run - Left Shift
 Jump - Enter
 Crouch - C
 Turn around - Backspace
 Always run - Caps Lock

HOMEWORLD: CATAclysm

CATEGORY: Strategy
DEVELOPER: Sierra
NEED: P2-266, 32MB, SVGA, 3D Card
 Command multiple 360-degree 3-D views as you manage ship production and deployment in a gorgeous outer-space environment, leading your fleet against a powerful alien menace. Catadysm boasts 18 all-new ships, 25 new technologies, 17 single-player missions and fantastic multiplay, while improving on the interface and technology that earned Homeworld 1999's highest accolades. Explore the tutorial, play the first single-player mission and skirmish against the computer in multiplay mode.

NO ONE LIVES FOREVER

CATEGORY: Action/3D
DEVELOPER: Fox Interactive
NEED: P2-300, 64MB, SVGA, 3D Card
 No One Lives Forever is a story-driven, first person adventure delivering over-the-top action, tense subterfuge, outrageous villains and wry humor in the tradition of the great 1960's spy films and TV shows. Armed with an assortment of conventional and experimental weaponry and gadgets, The Operative, Cate Archer, will explore exotic locales, circumvent devious traps, and contend with deadly agents determined to take her out of the spy trade once and for all.



CONTROLS

Forward - Up Arrow
 Backward - Down Arrow
 Step left - ,
 Step right - .
 Turn left - Left Arrow
 Turn right - Right Arrow
 Sidestep - Left Alt
 Run - Left Shift
 Jump - Enter

Crouch - C
 Turn around - Backspace
 Always run - Caps Lock
 Fire - Left Ctrl or Mouse Button 0
 Use object - Space
 Reload weapon - R
 Next ammo type - A
 Next weapon -]
 Previous weapon - [
 Holster weapon - H
 View inventory - P
 Look up - PgUp
 Look down - PgDn
 Mouse look - /
 Center view - End
 Zoom in - I
 Zoom out - O

NHL 2001

CATEGORY: Sport
DEVELOPER: EA Sport
NEED: P200, 32MB, 3D Card
 High-flyin', hard hittin', big shootin' powerplay hockey. Experience the drama on life on the ice with NHL 2001. Lace up the skates and play with or against all 30 National Hockey League teams, compete with the new expansion Columbus Blue Jackets and Minnesota Wild, and 20 International teams including Ukraine and Latvia.

REACH FOR THE STARS

CATEGORY: Strategy
DEVELOPER: SSI
NEED: P200, 64MB, SVGA 2MB
 Reach for the Stars (RFTS) is a turn-based strategy game of galactic exploration, colonization, and conquest. The original RFTS, released in the mid 1980's, was wildly popular in its day, winning spots on many "Game Of The Year" and "Best Game" lists, and even now maintains a very loyal following. Reach for the Stars is considered to be one of the original 4X (eXplore, eXpand, eXploit, eXterminate) games.

WOLFENSTEIN (INCLUDING GL PATCHES)

CATEGORY: 1st Person Shooter
DEVELOPER: Apogee
NEED: 486, 16MB, 3D Card optional
 Since Wolfenstein 2000 is just around the corner we thought we'd resurrect this demo again just to get you back in the mood. You are B.J. Blazkowicz, the Allies' bad boy of espionage and a terminal action seeker. Your mission... infiltrate the Nazi fortress Castle Hollehammer and find the plans for Operation Eisenfaust, the Nazi blueprint for building the perfect army. Now as a prisoner in a Nazi war prison, you must escape and kill as many Nazi's as you can.

STARFLEET COMMAND VOLUME II

CATEGORY: Action/Strategy
DEVELOPER: Interplay
NEED: P233, 64MB, SVGA, 3D Card
 Starfleet Command Volume II allows the player to experience new races such as the Mirak Star League and the Interstellar Concordium. In addition to these new races there are also many new weapon systems now in place. The Interstellar Concordium have a powerful Plasmatic Pulsar Device to enforce peace on the known powers. The Mirak specialize in missile combat and have the most fearsome missile cruisers ever seen in the Star Trek universe. The Mirak have also upped the ante of fighter combat and the known powers must respond.

GAMEPLAY CD2

Quake 3 Point Release 125
Soldier Of Fortune Patch
Half-life CS Academy Beta
User Created Maps

TECH CD2

MEMTURBO 2.0

MemTurbo is a program that increases available RAM on your system. It also defragments your physical RAM, making your CPU and motherboard more efficient without modifying your virtual memory. It recovers memory leaks from applications and flushes unused libraries and DLLs temporarily out to disk, making more room for your favorite games or applications. You define the target level of available RAM, which MemTurbo then attempts to achieve.

PAINTSHOP PRO 7.0

PaintShop Pro is an award winning image-editing tool that offers a robust set of painting and drawing tools and support for more than 40 image formats. Features include dockable toolbars, built-in special-effects filters, RGB color separation, masking options, complete layer support, "picture tube" brushes, CMYK separation, flexible painting and retouching brushes, and adjustable cropping and selection tools.

SERVER CD2

NETCAPTOR

NetCaptor allows you to browse multiple Web sites at the same time. Utilizing Microsoft Internet Explorer, each site is opened on a separate tab, allowing you to switch between them easily. The number of sites that can be opened is limited only by system memory. It also comes with many nice features - customized toolbars; open groups of sites with a single click; automatically close pop-up windows and more.

EUDORA 5.0

Eudora 5.0 is a robust email client whose features include multiple address book formatting options and the ability to filter, redirect, and forward mail. It supports QuickTime 3.0 and HTML enriched email, letting you include stylized, formatted text and in-line graphics in your messages. It's the email package we use around the office, so it has to be good.

IN ASSOCIATION WITH JACK OF ALL GAMES 

HALF-LIFE



Do you remember your first encounter with the green tentacle beast? We do...



More survivors... but what is that noise?



It seems to be coming from behind



So it's blind! Tread softly. Easy does it...



Resist the urge

FIRSTPERSON SHOOTER CONVENTION #3322021-294723b (i):
 "When said game's protagonist comes up against a potential threat in organic/living form, said protagonist must pummel said potential threat with all munitions at said protagonist's disposal to progress- and only if they can't find a brightly coloured key first." Half-Life broke this rule, and it broke it in style.

How could one forget this section of the Half-Life? This is *the* moment - all enthralling sub-moments of it too - that defined Valve's revolutionary firstperson shooter. Up until this point, everything played out to firstperson shooter norm. When you came across an enemy, you shot at it until it keeled over. Simple. Upon entering the blast pit however, things took a turn into unfamiliar territory.

After unloading all the ammunition you had into the beast from afar (including those deceptively placed grenades nearby), melee combat proved to be less successful. The tentacled beast was fast and deadly. With the catwalks and ladders seemingly within reaching distance, even the old make-a-run-for-it trick was fruitless - the beast was lightning fast with its claws. Whatever you tried, the result was your death. The beast seemed invincible. The tension would have made a nervous wreck of the most resolute players.

Nearly beaten, despair was an unforgiving bedfellow. Those that didn't find solace in the words of a walkthrough would have then considered the advice of the first guard upon entering the area: "Be quiet. It hears things..."

Yes of course! Sneak right past! But wait - this is an action game. You don't sneak. You announce your presence with a pack of airborne rockets.

It worked. As you sneaked past what seemed like the closest couple of metres in your experience away from the unsuspecting beast, you realised its blindness - it relied on sound to find its prey. The knowledge offered the necessary hope, but it didn't relieve the tension.

But Valve didn't really stop there. What followed was an intricate mission to put the beast out of commission, with the sort of actions usually reserved for an end of game boss.

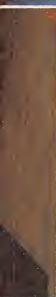
Throughout this quest, firstperson action convention was thrown out of the window. Success called for use of the old synapses - and Valve often presented the player with some real challenges.

However a solution was never far from reach. When you finally fired up the burner, blasted the tentacled beast into oblivion and descended into the awaiting maw, the satisfaction felt was immense.

Wouldn't you agree?



JACK OF ALL GAMES © 2000



oor...



This display of firepower is useless



Argh... flatline



What did the guard say about being quiet?



Nice and slow...



Protective eyewear on, please



Withstand that!

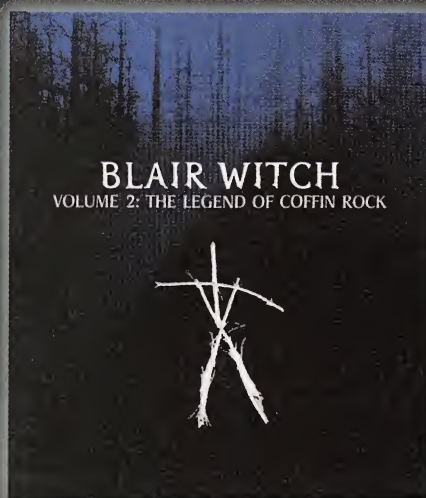
RITUAL
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STUDIOS

three games
three developers
one mythology

the Blair Witch series



October



November



December

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Yet to be classified



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WIN! Pillage & Plunder!



Here's your chance to become a real viking. And you won't even need to change your name to Sven to do it. Or even Lothar. Or Henrik, for that matter. But, anyway, we digress. To celebrate the imminent release of Cultures, our friends at THQ are offering ONE lucky reader the opportunity to take home a very special Limited Edition Cultures Viking Pack. It's bloody, viking fantastic!



WHERE TO SEND

Write the answer, along with your name and address on the back of an envelope.

Do not forget to put the competition name on the front of the envelope.

Entries close November 28th.

SEND TO:

PC PowerPlay
78 Renwick St.
Redfern NSW 2016

PCPP 53 WINNERS

Diablo II

1st Prize

D Rinkel, South Corowa NSW

Runners Up

S Lightfoot, Port Lincoln SA

J Biady, Bexley North NSW

T Foxe, Cabramatta NSW

L McKenzie, Redcliffe QLD

S Robinson, Claremont WA

General Lee

S Schoff, Buderim QLD

My Head is Freezing

With sixty winners (and over 600 entries!) there are too many new Icewind Dale beanie owners to list here.

Best of Racing

F Wilkinson, Richmond NSW



THE PACK CONTAINS

- A bottle of Cultures Viking beer
- A Wooden Crate with a Cultures "Natural Horn" Viking Glass (for drinking the beer)
- A Cultures lighter
- A Cultures t-shirt
- And a copy of the Cultures game

In addition, FIVE runners-up will each win a copy of the game, too!

THE IMPORTANT BIT

To enter the competition, you need to tell us your favourite Viking joke. "Did you hear the one about the three Vikings who walked into a bar...?" or "Why did the Viking cross the road...?" - you know, that sort of thing. Make it up, if you have to. But make sure it's pretty damn, viking funny.

The entrant whose wit splits our collective side in the most rib-tickling fashion will win the pack, whilst those who only get a chuckle out of us will be relegated to the runners-up position.

Answer on the back of an envelope to the usual address.



CULTURES

The new game from THQ is a realtime strategy game with a Nordic twist. Developed by several of the team who created the original Settlers, Cultures looks set to be "little blokes" gaming par excellence. With its distinct city building and resource management flavours, the preview code we've been playing this month has proved a compelling enough reason to waste those valuable working hours. Check out the demo on this month's CD PowerPlay.



SCOOP!

CARMACK SEEN WITHOUT PC!



As this exclusive photograph reveals, Quake 3 code guru John Carmack was discovered away from his PC.

Contrary to popular belief, Carmack - who wears spectacles - does not have a computer keyboard attached to his abdomen. The operation was a complete success, apparently.

In response, an id Software spokesperson said, yesterday, "Give him a break, will you!"

THEODORE



STOP PRESS!

TEAM FORTRESS 2 DELAYED!

In news just to hand, Valve Software has passed on a message to say that the eagerly-awaited online action game, Team Fortress 2, will ship a day later than expected. Fans should check the shelves of their local gamestore on December 10, 2002, rather than December 9, 2002, as had been previously reported.

The reason given for the delay is to allow the team sufficient time to rewrite the entire engine code for the third time.



EXCLUSIVE! ULTIMA X ANNOUNCED!

Electronic Arts has shocked the games world by unveiling plans to resurrect the Avatar for the tenth time and yet another journey to Britannia.

Following the departure of Ultima creator Richard Garriott and the poor reception greeted the previous chapter in the series, a number of design changes are anticipated. Our spy on the development team has informed us that Ultima X will use a stripped-down version of the Ascension engine. "We felt it might be wise to allow people to actually run the game on today's PCs," he said, yesterday.

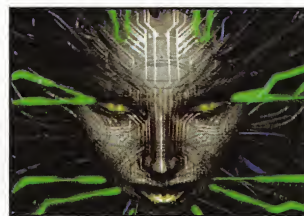
"In addition, this will let us concentrate on perfecting that classic Ultima gameplay - killing glowing yellow goats and baking bread."



QUIZ

ARE YOU A HARDCORE GAMER?

This month
SYSTEM SHOCK 2



You Can Win

1. What is the name of the doctor who contacts you at the very start of the game?

Bring It On

2. The military ship escorting the Von Braun is called the UNN what?

Hurt Me Plenty

3. What are the full names of the two lovers who flee the Von Braun in an escape pod?

Hardcore

4. The three axes of the TriOptimum corporation are?

Nightmare

5. Literature might call them ghosts, but how does Shodan describe them?

- Answers
1. Dr Janice Pollio
2. UNN Rickenbacker
3. Tommy Suarez and Rebecca Siddons
4. Military, Science, Consumer
5. Self-hypnotic defects in the R-grade unit

TONY reviews

Christian Read

© John Dewhurst 2000

What am I gonna do with five monkeys, you stupid cartoon.



PC PowerPlay

The magazine for games professionals



Next month have your say in the Game of the Year Awards

PC PowerPlay #56 - On sale 6 December 2000

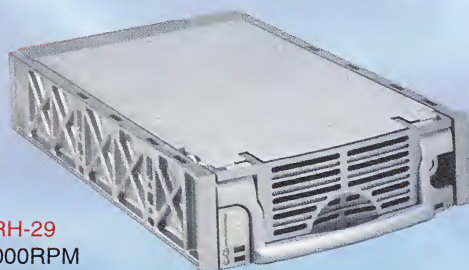


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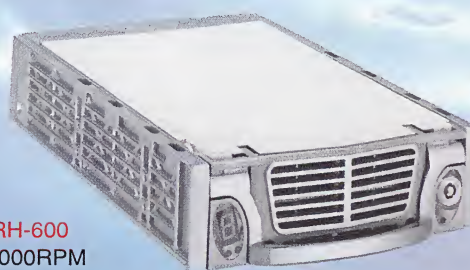
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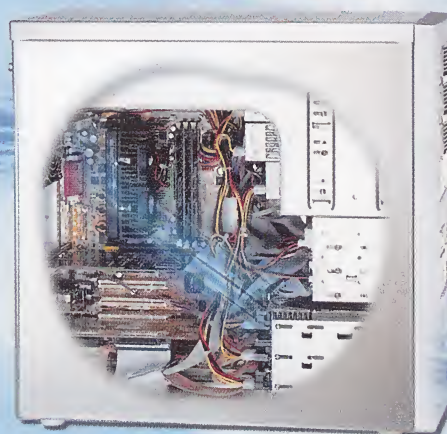
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